

ISSUE NO 24

"INVISIBLE WOMEN"

VOL 9 NO 1

SUMMER 1984

ISSN 0275-3715

\$2.50

# AURORA

SPECULATIVE FEMINISM

## SF



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# AURORA

SPECULATIVE FEMINISM

## SF

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### Publication Information

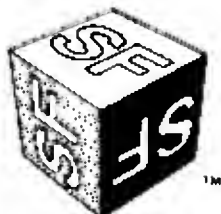
Aurora is published by SF. The Publications Committee consists of Diane Martin (head), Peter (he/him), Georgie Schnobrich, Richard S. Russell, Lucy Nash, Hank Luttrell, Philip Kaveny, Julie Gomoll, Jeanne Gomoll, Terry A. Garey, and Jan Bogard. Cover printed by Heritage Printing, Milwaukee; interior printing by Gray-Waller Press, Madison. All of the opinions in Aurora are those of their authors and/or artists and are not necessarily reflections of the policies or opinions of the publisher. Any resemblance of any fictional character, written or depicted, to any real person, living or dead, is coincidental. The Aurora and SF logos are registered trademarks of SF. All rights revert to original artists and authors.

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# INTRODUCTION

Joanna Russ's book, *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (University of Texas Press, 1983) starts out with a science fiction metaphor, a mini-SF story that is summed up with an imaginary dictionary definition:

Thus "Glotologish" has recently entered intergalactic slang as a synonym for ridiculous self-deception bolstered by wide-spread and elaborate social fictions leading to massive distortion of information...GLOTOLOG, n., colloq. Intergalactic, current: Information control without direct censorship.

Russ' book is about the mechanics of sexism (glotolog) in literature. It's a complex mechanism. She notes that "formal prohibition tends to give the game away...if significant literature can by definition be produced only in Latin, the custom of not teaching Latin to girls will... sooner or later, cause somebody to wonder what would happen if the situation were changed...In a nominally egalitarian society the ideal situation (socially speaking) is one in which the members of the 'wrong' group have the freedom to engage in literature...and yet do not do so, thus proving that they can't [and to] develop various strategies for ignoring, condemning, or belittling the artistic works that result. If properly done, these strategies result in a social situation in which the 'wrong' people are (supposedly) free to commit literature, art, or whatever, but very few do, and those who do (it seems) do it badly, so we can all go home to lunch."

*How to--* is a catalog of those strategies, and the book cover graphically depicts some of them. Though these strategies are specifically applied to women's lack of, or discredited achievements in the field of literature and art, the strategies are equally apparent in many other areas of women's experience. I found myself thinking about business and athletic fields as I read along, coming up with my own personal examples as Russ related literary ones.

Cumulatively, these social strategies make up the "Big Lie". A person doesn't need to be overtly woman-hating in order to participate in institutionalized sexism: "To act in a way that is both sexist and racist", says Russ, "to maintain one's class privilege, it is only necessary to act in the customary, ordinary, usual, even polite manner."

Russ tells hundreds of stories to illustrate the workings of the strategies which suppress women's writing. For example, she tells the stories of Margaret Cavendish and Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun's writing which was assumed to be the product of male authors. Then, there are the labels used to segregate and dismiss writing by women as trivial, or not art: "Confessional novels", "Regional writing", "Genre fiction", "Women's Studies", or "Science Fiction". (It's refreshing and surprising--and sad for the fact that it's surprising--to see science fiction writers quoted alongside all the other mainstream literary discussion.) Russ also offers personal examples from her own and colleagues' lives to illustrate her points.

## Jeanne Gomoll

I recommend Russ' *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. Know thine enemy, even if the enemy is not a single target, a "bad guy". Knowing the enemy to be nebulous and pervasive, as long as you know some of its methods, cannot help but be of some use.

In this much-suppressed issue of under-appreciated women SF/Fantasy writers and artists, I'd like to begin by saying that the year's delay

*Continued on p. 10.*



Ilene Weber

Joanna Russ

*She didn't write it. But if it's clear she did the deed... She wrote it, but she shouldn't have.*

(It's political, sexual, masculine, feminist.)

*She wrote it, but look what she wrote about.* (The bedroom, the kitchen, her family. Other women!)

*She wrote it, but she wrote only one of it.* ("Jane Eyre. Poor dear, that's all she ever...")

*She wrote it, but she isn't really an artist, and it isn't really art.* (It's a thriller, a romance, a children's book. It's sci fi!)

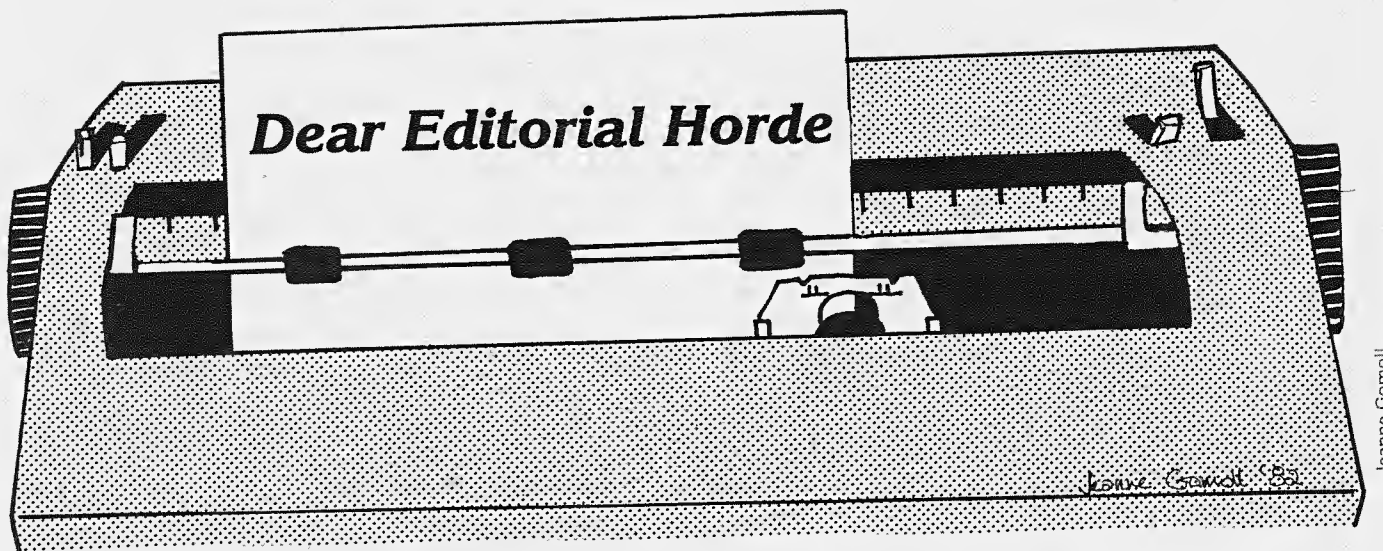
*She wrote it, but she had help.*

(Robert Browning. Brannwell Brontë. Her own "masculine side.")

*She wrote it, but she's an anomaly.* (Woolf. With Leonard's help...)

*She wrote it BUT...*

**How to Suppress Women's Writing by Joanna Russ**



Jeanne Gornoll

**Ethel Lindsey**  
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**Angus DD7 7QQ**  
**SCOTLAND**

I can give an addition to my report on Blake's Seven: Apparently there was such a barrage of letters demanding an explanation for its ending in such a way (all the char-

acters being shot dead by the villains), that the producer was finally moved to make a statement. He said it ended in such a way because the lead character Avon had "become psychotic"! I bet you all thought the BBC was very staid, yet here it is sending its characters psychotic. He did not say what it had done to the actors involved--they may be biting the carpet somewhere.

I found the whole educational SF theme [of *Aurora* 23] very interesting. I notice that mention is made of such courses in France and Italy, but no mention of any given in Britain. It may, of course, be creeping in at places under the heading of sociology. I do know of one university who had a course on the police procedural novel which was run by their department of sociology.

As I understand it in our universities, the study of science was considered much less important than that of classical studies. I was watching on TV a new version of *Goodbye Mr. Chips* and mused that there was a man who spent his whole life teaching Latin; if there was a science master at that school he was certainly never mentioned. The books of C. P. Snow also reflect this situation of disdain for science among the classicists. It has been challenged, naturally, and is, I think, everywhere in retreat. I am doubtful, however, that things will have mellowed to the extent of a course in SF. Can any of your readers tell me if I am wrong?

When mention is made of women in SF, does anyone think of Anne McCaffrey's *Restoree*? It was certainly the first time I had encountered in SF a strong woman character, and I can remember at the time the great feeling of satisfaction to find the woman rescuing the male for a change. I was quite enchanted with this! Naturally, it was never a very popular book. In fact, I can remember being on a panel

with Anne McCaffrey and when I mentioned *Restoree*, she looked very surprised and I could tell by the blank faces of the audience (mainly masculine in those days) that it was unknown to them. If you want to mention a practically unknown book--I give you *Restoree*.

**Barbara Tennison**  
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I've just read through *Aurora* 23, and the consistent focus on feminism is extremely re-

freshing. (I seem to run into an awful lot of women who "aren't feminists but..." The term feminist scares them the way "women's lib" used to.) It's great to see that somebody else can get past the theme of how badly men (or, the male-dominated culture) treat women. This may be consciousness-raising, but what do you do when your consciousness is raised? *Aurora* at least suggests that there is literate life outside the patriarchy. I've also glad to see that that doesn't mean abandoning men altogether, tempting as that alternative can be. I've always understood feminism to be opposing a power pattern, which most men and some women have little motivation to change, rather than men as individuals.

**Garth Spencer**  
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**CANADA**

The interview with Jan Bogstad and Fannie LeMoine showed up the unrecognized need to know how to communicate in

English. Bogstad points this out among computer science or engineering students; presumably, they speak whatever argot they're used to, among family, friends, and colleagues, and don't know anything else until they walk into an English class--certainly not knowing a need for anything different for writing purposes. I'm inclined to think this is a continent-wide problem, and involves more segments of society than just these students.

**Tony Alsobrook-Renner**  
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[re *Aurora* 23] It just occurs to me to ask Suzette Elgin why she says all languages (except *Láadan*, of course) were constructed by men. I'm not saying they weren't, but it seems to me that there could be some, if not a great deal, of input from women in the creation of a language. Somehow I just can't picture all the women sitting around waiting for the men to make up the language. Anyway, this splitting of things up into "women's" and "men's" makes me uncomfortable. For instance, when I hear the term "women's music", I get the feeling I'm not wanted to hear it because I'm a man. I feel uncomfortable because I don't want to be excluded because of my sex. I also feel genuinely bad, ashamed, or whathaveyou when I think of how oppressed women have been through the ages, and it makes me feel worse every time it's pointed out how badly women have been treated (and are being treated).

Moving on to a more specific topic, John C. Alderson's comments were mind-bogglingly stupid. Alderson just simply does not want to admit that the word "man", as in "man the ship", is sexist. There is no logical reason why "woman" could not have developed into a very in the same way "man" did; it just didn't. And wait just a doggone minute, if a "chairwoman" is part chair and part woman, a "chairman" is the same thing. I prefer dropping the gender-specific part of terms such as that and refer to the "chair", or the "speaker".

Cheryl Cline's column [Other Doors] was very, very fine, although I must admit I have been too cheap and/or lazy to obtain any of the publications reviewed. And, saying that, I feel like a real creep. (Is it just me, or does creep seem to only apply to males?)

"Dear God" seemed a little too heavy handed, but did make several good points. All and all, a nice piece of work.

The interview with Fannie LeMoine and Jan Bogstad was very interesting. I feel a bit overwhelmed, because I've read very little of the "important" science fiction around, and god knows, even less of the "important" non-genre literature. I think I deep-down enjoy feeling guilty....

**Valerie Eads**

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In recent issues of *Aurora*, some points were raised about Le Guin's *The Left*

*Hand of Darkness* that require comment:

I must totally disagree with the notion that Le Guin "makes the Gethenians men". This goes all the way back to Stanislaw Lem, I believe, who made this observation in one of the academic SF journals well over 10 years ago. Le Guin's response, as nearly as I can recall it, was to the effect that the "men" were in Lem's own mind, and that she could hardly have sent her characters trekking over a glacier in skirts. This seems to me quite adequate.

However, in the novel itself, obviating any need to debate the fine points of gender role expectations or political correctness, there is ample evidence of the falseness of the assertion that the Gethenians are men. Chapter 17, "An Orgota Creation Myth" tells

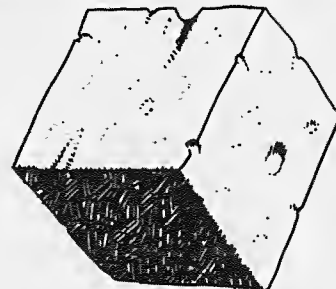
that, "The name of the other, the younger brother, the father, his name is not known". Does anyone seriously wish to contend that that myth was made by a man?

As for Estraven the Faggot, it doesn't wash. The character is specifically identified as a woman--"ven"--and she bears a name of the goddess--"Estre". "He" is literally "Moon-woman". The name is that of the goddess whose rite was celebrated by the Celts of Britain at the spring equinox. We still celebrate her rites today, although the timing is off, and her symbols of fertility--eggs and baby bunnies--are part of our own folklore. Look it up in the OED under "Easter". "Ven" is Irish for woman. It is usually spelled "ben", but the pronunciation (The *b* lenites because of the following *e*.) is closer to "ven" and it is often actually written that way.

There is always the possibility that this is mere coincidence and that Le Guin selected "Estraven" the way she selected "Omelas" (from a road sign). It would take someone who has had more than a one-semester Introduction to Old Irish to do a thorough analysis, but, besides all the references to the moon and its cyclic nature in the book, there is only one country I know of on (this) Earth that is called Winter.

Genly Ai's homophobia is based on even more tenuous grounds than the masculinity of the Gethenians. Ai says he loves Estraven. Is it homophobia that they choose celibacy? Far from being repulsed by the ideas of sex with Estraven, Ai refers to "the sexual tension between us, admitted but not assuaged". It is Estraven who rules out a physical relationship, saying, "I must not touch you", when kemmer, the period of sexual potency, arrives. Ai is left with nothing to do but agree gracefully, and record that "I do not know if we were right". Homophobia?

If there is any sexual prejudice in the book, it is on the part of the Gethenians, whose casual use of the word "pervert" to describe people like Genly Ai is presumably intended as a parallel to the careless insults used by people like Genly Ai in our own society. Estraven, without intended prejudice, describes Ai as an "odddity" and a "sexual freak". The technique of using the ignorant observations of an outsider to make ironic comments on one's own society is hardly new and would seem to require no great sophistication on the part of the reader to enjoy. Referring to a standard human male as "The Pervert" is an obvious



Bill Rostler

"THE TRUCK"

shot and by nostretch of the imagination indicative of homophobia, but just the opposite. I can recall no evidence whatever in the book that Ai is straight.

It is not the masculinity but the femininity of Gethenians that gives Genly Ai problems. He is a sexist, and his sexism is a device well-used by Le Guin to show the foolishness of sexism. The best example is Genly Ai's ludicrous sexist conclusion that the femininity of the Gethenians is what keeps them from mobilizing for war. A short while later he makes the high falutin' statement that, "if civilization has an opposite, it is war". Genly Ai never realizes the contradictions he makes, but that is no excuse for the reader to be equally dense. A similarly sexist woman might have concluded that the Gethenian penchant for personal violence (Estraven feels the need to explain why a personal insult was not avenged by cutting out the offender's tongue.) was due to their masculinity.

Genly Ai is Everyman (yes, and Everywoman), a venerable character in Western literature whose purpose is to show us ourselves. Le Guin does not make the Gethenians men, we do.

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After reading Suzette Haden Elgin's article [An Update on Láadan, Aurora 23] I had to go back and re-read "Why a Woman is Not Like a Physicist" in #21. It kind of went by me the first time. I guess I couldn't quite believe anyone but a rabid anti-feminist would have really said what it seemed she had. But she did say it: "...the only language available to women is one constructed by men, shaped by men, and controlled by men, from its earliest beginnings..."

As a human being who happens to be a woman, I'd still be appalled and insulted by that statement, even if, after reflection, I decided it was essentially correct. But I can think of several reasons why it's not, and so, in love and anger and also in rational debate, I'm responding to it.

To begin with, we don't know how language originated; all the languages of which we have any record are descendants of many generations of earlier ones. It may even be that non-literate languages are far less "primitive" than written ones, which tend to change more slowly and so remain longer at each stage of linguistic evolution, if it's right to talk of such a thing. But in any case, all languages change all the time, and every time anyone communicates verbally, the language is changed a bit. Like, man, remember how we used to talk 20 years ago--you still dig it? Some changes are bigger than others, and to the extent that men control the mass media, they do indeed have a disproportionate effect on language. (But note that I mean by this the few, mostly male, members of this controlling elite--not every speaker of our language who happens to be male.)

There are two ways that women, as a specific group, are involved in the creation and change of the consensus language. The first is that, in general, the more male-dominated a society is, the more exclusively the care and training



Steven Fox

of young children is women's work, and so, the more certain it is that everyone, male or female, was taught to talk solely by women. The basic consensus language was transmitted by women but available to everyone; any specialized for-men-only spiritual or technical argot, male-bonding slang, or whatever, was secondary to that.

We mustn't be suckered from that into thinking that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, of course. The question of why women have so long, in so many parts of the world, been the prime transmitters down the generation of languages and cultures that oppress them--now that's a serious subject for study for any one interested in changing the real world. But it gives a different perspective on the need for a special women's language, if we take the position that men as a definable subgroup (comparable to such groups as physicists, poker players, or SF fans--whatever the sexual composition of such subgroups) have a far stronger tradition that women do of creating a specialized language for dealing with their in-group concerns.

It would be arguable from the above that women have no language except what they share with society as a whole--whether women or men are the prime creators of that language. Actually, however, as Elgin herself points out, women do have forms of language in common--and these are typical of the language subsets of oppressed groups. It is probable that women as a group affect language in the same way as other oppressed groups do, at least here in the US, where the cultural history is one of constant revitalization from underneath. The music, clothing, cooking, and language of poor people, racial minorities, immigrants, and so on have always been at the growing edge of the consensus culture, from jazz-based slang to designer jeans.

So far as I know--and I'd love to be proved wrong--there aren't any studies of the contributions of women's subcultures to contemporary US English. Any such study would face the difficulty of distinguishing the effects of ongoing co-optation from changes in the climate of opinion brought about by the women's movement. It's easy to see how deliberate struggle

has vanquished the grammarians in the case of "their" for "his", as in "Everyone 'neath their vine and fig tree..." but to what extent is feminism responsible for men's increased freedom to carry bags, wear jewelry, eat quiche in public, or use color words such as "beige" in conversation? (This last is something my high school English teacher back in the 50s assured me real men don't do.) In the absence of studies to confirm or deny it, we must not write off the hypothesis that women as an oppressed group have a specific effect on the consensus language.

We must also remember that any individual is a member of a number of overlapping categories, (For instance, even though being a woman is quite different from being a physicist, one individual may be both.) And even when it comes to combatting sexual oppression, the categories "man" and "woman" may not be the most useful ones. It is dangerously sloppy thinking to identify the small male ruling elite with all men. An example: an unemployed man who gets drunk and beats up his wife believes he has more in common with President Reagan than he does with her. If we feminists accede to this belief we must assume that this man cannot be changed, only destroyed. Worse, we will come to believe that it follows that any man--no matter how loving and supportive of women he seems--has more in common with both the President and the wife-beater than he has with any woman, and hence is not to be trusted.

As for me, the subset of humanity of which, say, Samuel R. Delany and I are both members is of far more importance to be as a feminist that that subset whose members include me and Nancy Reagan.

**Shirley Goodgame**  
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I know this is SF blasphemy, but the worst female SF writers I have read write every bit as well as Asimov. I credit his enormous output on that assembly line, but when it comes to quality I see mediocre female writers in the field writing rings around these revered old "Giants".

So much for my opinion. But this I know for a fact: you were correct in saying Suzette Haden Elgin is a Saint.

Did Greg Rihn [in "The Sword and the Cinema"] have to use the analogy "...like a lot of old women with a mouse in the room" Sigh!

**Julianne Chatelain**  
250 28th St., #1  
San Francisco, CA 94131

I'd like to say a word for one of my favorite unknown SF women writers, Naomi

Mitchison. Long ago I found her *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* in a bargain bin--New English Library paperback, April 1977--and it blew my mind. She wrote it at the age of 63 (its preface by Hillary Robinson has some biographical info), copyrighted it in 1962. She wrote another book, *Solution 3*, in 1975. Robinson goes into her background and politics, which are important to many people to be sure (she was upper-class Scots, she was adopted Mother to the Bakgatla tribe of Botswana), but the book itself is what's important to me.

The science is good. The ideas are good. The loose memoir-shaped form has its own integrity, describing one woman's interactions with a number of alien races. The narrator, Mary, is admirable and honest. The writing is good, damn it. At the time, it was some of the first SF that mentioned sex, and despite the recent deluge of sex-with-aliens, I think it's still some of the best. I can't read or write an alien-interaction story now without thinking of Naomi, and a good thing, too.

But do you know what I like best? I feel, as I read, that this writing is the product of a **woman's** mind that is **not fucked up**. Clearly female and taking on the world. What a miracle that seems to me. I spend too much time fighting to get to a quiet center where, if I'm not simply exhausted, I can try to imagine what I'd be like if I didn't have to spend all my energy fighting. It gives me great pleasure whenever a woman breaks through to be herself. I'd like to get Naomi's other book. She may or may not be alive now, but I'm sure she's still being herself. "Explorers are likely to have crueller deaths. But, being explorers, they know how to meet them."

Just finished Rebecca Goldstein's *The Mind-body Problem*, which came out in paperback this month. Science, fiction, but not really SF. Funny, tragic, philosophical, and sexual. Another woman being herself. Have any of you read it? What do you think?



Steven Fox



# Re-Evaluating Andre Norton

by Kendra Usack

Andre Norton's science fiction and fantasy novels have always appealed to both adults and children. What is it about her books that lets them cross the time barrier that usually divides "kids books" from adult fiction? Especially when her books often placed only on children's shelves, where adults won't find them? To discover what is behind the dual appeal of Norton's books, let's look first at how children view Norton's fiction, and then compare that with a more "adult" view.

I remember reading *The Zero Stone* and *The Uncharted Stars* as a child. I was captivated with the plot and the action. It was exciting--Murdoc Jern risked all of his assets to trade with Torg's people for the fabulous and legendary greenstones. Jern and his feline companion, Eet, were almost killed when their spaceship pilot abandoned them deep in enemy territory.

Norton's narrative skills are deceptively simple. For example, in *Forerunner*, she uses a limited third-person narrator, which means the reader only understands what Simsa understands--and Simsa is an uneducated child who has never travelled out of her city, let alone to other worlds. Yet by the end of the book, Simsa is able to make sophisticated decisions about her future.

Another way of appealing to children is the way Norton makes an alien really alien, partly by distancing us from the creatures' minds (through a human interpreter), and also by making their purposes and needs different from those of humans.

Norton works several original mythologies into her novels. Less frequently discussed than her Witchworld novels, Norton's Forerunner stories contain a rich and important framework. The long-vanished Forerunner civilizations have left behind wondrous ruins, some rich in material goods, but all rich in other finds--of the mind or spirit. Often these Forerunner discoveries cause profound changes in the lives of the main characters, by helping them to become complete, achieving a wholeness they lacked before.

Another recurring theme, which shows the complexity of Norton's novels, is the theme of complementary pairs. These pairs are arranged so that one partner has certain skills, but is lacking in and needs to learn others. The other partner provides the missing skills and

also aids the partner towards becoming a complete being.

Let's look at how Norton uses her Forerunner mythologies and complementary pairing to create characters and stories that appeal to children--yet are rich in flavor for adult tastes as well.

- \*Diskan and the Brothers-in-Fur (*X-Factor*, 1965)
- \*Ziantha and Ras (*Forerunner Foray*, 1973)
- \*Simsa and Thom (*Forerunner*, 1981)
- \*Murdoc Jern and Eet (*The Zero Stone*, 1968; and *The Uncharted Stars*, 1969)

Diskan, from *X-Factor*, is the first human to open the gate into Xcotal, a city of a Forerunner civilization. Xcotal's wealth is the Thal patterns, a maze which Diskan walks with the brothers-in-fur, a group of alien "animals" he befriends. The patterns are a form of energy, which can be harnessed to create or to destroy. Diskan uses the Thal patterns to create a fake treasure, which destroys the Jacks (pirates of the future who prey on archaeologists) who are pursuing him.

Another of Xcotal's treasures is the brothers-in-fur. Diskan's discovery of them causes him to use his abilities and to perceive that he has a right to fair and equal treatment from other people. Diskan must also make a choice whether to remain with his own kind or leave them entirely, a choice which the brothers-in-fur realize he must make alone.

The complementary pair in *X-Factor* is more complex than most, because it consists of Diskan, and a group of aliens, the brothers-in-fur, who must unite with a human in order to regain their heritage. He gains, from the brothers-in-fur and the people of Xcotal, the acceptance that he never received from his own kind:

Before him was a straight running stream of water, sweet water, which was the road, and through that moved the Shadows. But these were Shadows no longer, for he saw them at last for what they were bodies like his own--not aliens--though even with different shaping they could not be strange. And in their eyes recognition, welcome for the unlocker of doors, the one uniting brothers-in-fur with part-

ners-in flesh--who might lead also to the surmounting of still farther and stranger.

For Ziantha, the protagonist of *Forerunner* Foray, the cross-time teleportation of a telepathic focus stone literally changes her whole world, as well as her view of it. Ziantha is forced to depend on herself. Before, she passively viewed her psychic ability as a well-honed tool to be used by Yasa, her "veep", or patron, and Ogan, her trainer. By the end of the story, she realizes her true worth to Yasa and Ogan: they will use her and then discard her.

Ziantha also discovers her past lives. In one life, she was Vintura, the rebel captain of a large force, opposing a leader named Turan; but in another life, as D'Eyree, she saved Turan from his murderous consort, and saved her people from deadly sea storms. She learned what it meant to die, to sacrifice herself for the good of her people.

Because of her journey into the past, to recover the other focus stone, Ziantha also becomes more aware of her own psychic talents and is better able to use them. The stones help her to focus her talent. She is also more willing to act on her own and leaves Ogan in order to save Ras, another telepath, who was drawn with her into Turan's world and now remains out of body.

In their past lives, Ziantha and Ras were enemies, but in the present, they are complementary. Ras teaches Ziantha to use the skills she possesses to bring the other focus stones out of the past. He also helps her to develop self-confidence. In turn, Ziantha is Ras's means for gaining knowledge of the past, as well as

the only other telepath with the skill to save his life. She is also a good choice as a future companion.

In *Forerunner*, Simsa, the main character, also changes when she comes into contact with a Forerunner civilization. At the beginning of the book, Simsa is an incomplete being--trained to be close-minded and to deal with the harsher facts of life. She must part the veils of time to return to her ancestor and receive her ancestor's memories, which will complete her. Simsa's ancestor is the mother goddess of many planets, including the one on which Simsa finds her--and Simsa proudly accepts her heritage. In this passage, the ancestor opens up worlds of the mind and spirit:

The girl lay quiet now. She sighed once, turning her head a fraction so that still her eyes met those of the other. Inside her mind barriers weakened, gave away. She was as one who had been in prison all her life and was now suddenly lifted into wide fields under an open sky. (*Forerunner*, p. 241)

Simsa brings her new knowledge full circle, as she decides to once more seek the worlds which her ancestor knew.

In *Forerunner*, we again meet the Jacks. They have discovered a site of ancient Forerunner ships and are plundering them, in hopes of finding weapons. These weapons can be bought and sold at enormous prices and used to wreak havoc on the universe.

Simsa must choose not only her heritage, but also the preservation of the galaxy--calling in the Patrol would risk the lives of her animal companions, the Zorcals.

In *Forerunner*, Simsa chooses her companion, Thom as her consort, but is unsure of his reaction, even though he wears a permanent metal cuff which is a complement and a channel for her powers:

"I do not know why I was born able to take that from what was stored here, this knowledge. I do well believe that this may come to be a very heavy burden, one I would willingly pass onto others, if I could. But can you give hands, your brain, that which is the very essence of you, to anyone else? (*Forerunner*, p. 279)

She asks, he accepts. Thom will eventually take her to other worlds.

The "zero stone", in *The Zero Stone* and in *Uncharted Stars*, weaves a life of danger and misery for Murdoc Jern. His father is murdered to get the stone, and at the beginning of *The Zero Stone*, Jern is fleeing certain death at the hands of natives, who have been loosed on him by the Thieves' Guild.

The zero stone is a Forerunner relic, set in a ring, which fits the glove of a spacesuit. The ring's awesome ability to boost any kind of energy makes it even more dangerous to Jern. The Patrol wants to destroy it, before it falls into evil hands, and the Thieves' Guild wants



Alain Comfort

to use it for criminal reasons. Both groups would kill to get the secrets of the ring. Murdoc ends up on his own, with both groups breathing down his neck.

Despite the awesome forces amassed against them, Murdoc and Eet, his alien companion, manage to complete their search for the source of the zero stones. In the surprise ending, when Eet at last returns to her (not his, as Jern thought) original form, introduces us to yet another of the millions of Forerunner races --Thalans.

In *The Zero Stone* and *Uncharted Stars*, Eet depends on Murdoc Jern for his greater physical strength, later for male-female companionship. Murdoc needs Eet to spark his hidden esper talents, and to push him to achieve things on his own. Eet, herself, explains her attraction:

It was not only a matter of expediency which made me choose to reveal myself to you. I spoke of natural affinities. There is a tie between us based on far more than temporary needs. As I have said, this body I now wear is not, perhaps, what I might have chosen for this particular phase.  
(*The Zero Stone*, p. 142)

In the six novels we've looked at, we entered worlds of Adventure, Romance, Mystery, Excitement, Quests, and Alien Beings--the stuff that children's fancies are caught by--worlds populated with protagonists who are or learn to become independent and responsible, capable of making wise decisions and forming fast friendships. Andre Norton's books also teach values and fire the imagination. Small wonder these stories appeal to children of all ages.



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Mary Bohdanowicz

Continued from p. 3.

of this issue of *Aurora* is not the result of that pervasive and nebulous "Glotologgishness". The delay has been mostly my fault for over-committing myself, and unfortunately, unless some new blood infuses the *Aurora* staff, future issues of the magazine may continue to lag behind schedule or never appear. But considering this issue's theme and the high caliber of contributions in it, not to mention the determination and communication skills of Diane Martin who kept working on the issue and kept after me, we are very proud to (finally) bring issue number 24 out.

Steve Fox's cover says visually what many of our contributors eloquently verbalize. They dust off, shine a light on, and point: "Look here! Look what we've found!" Barbara Emrys points at the works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and pushes aside the trivializing strategies which have relegated Gilman's writing to obscurity. In Russ' terms the strategies would be categorization and dismissal: "She's a pulp writer/genre writer, not a real writer". In fact Russ herself was guilty of dismissing Gilman's writing in precisely this way, and Emrys takes her to task for it. Russ does, however, criticize herself (in *How to--*) for having earlier accepting suppressing mechanisms in her literary criticisms. Emrys' article made me want to read more of Gilman than the ever-popular *The Yellow Wallpaper* and I en-

joyed *Herland* tremendously, thanks to Emrys' recommendation.

Writers Andre Norton, Katherine MacLean, Lee Killough, Miriam Allen de Ford, Evangeline Walton, and poet Sonya Dorman are all examined in this issue. Terry Garey writes a poetic tribute to artist Wendy Rose. Cheryl Cline uncovers some enormously interesting information about women fantastic fiction writers of the 19th century. [I tried to locate a photograph or drawing of all the women discussed in this issue of *Aurora*, but for Cline's article--even with the energetic help of several skilled librarians--I was only able to locate a photo of one (out of six) of the authors...] Jessica Amanda Salmonson comments on some mediocre (i.e., average) books by women SF writers, thereby addressing another sort of suppressive technique.

We limited ourselves to 40 pages for *Aurora* 24 and thus had to resist the urge to accept articles on the dozens of other women writers we could have included in this issue. If the *Aurora* staff had more time and ambitions, I'd be musing now that perhaps we should devote every other future issue to this theme. The material is certainly there. As it is, instead, we offer you some bibliographies and urge you to decide about these authors for yourself, and to pass the word on about them when you are impressed.

# Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Speculative Feminist

by Barbara Emrys



Arlin Teeselink

Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Gilman's fiction is part of her ideological world view, and therein lies its interest and power.

Ann J. Lane, "The Fictional World of Charlotte Perkins Gilman"

I've been thinking about Charlotte Perkins Gilman as I get ready to coordinate a science fiction workshop for the writers' conference now attached to the 10th annual National Women's Music Festival, and I thought about her at Wis-Con, too. One might have encountered her at either conference, probably trucking around copies of *The Forerunner*, the personal newspaper she wrote for seven years, and juggling a busy schedule of writing and lecturing. It's this fusion in her work of feminism and imaginative speculation that leads me to consider her as an underappreciated writer of what is sometimes called "social science fiction".

Gilman's work has been resurrected by feminist and radical scholars since the early 1970s. *Women and Economics*, *Herland*, and *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (her autobiography) are currently available in paperback, but the *Charlotte Perkins Gilman Reader*, a collection of stories and novel excerpts with a very fine introduction by Ann J. Lane, is now out of print. In her introduction, "The Fictional World of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Lane

points out that "The Yellow Wallpaper", Gilman's fictionalized account of the "rest cure" prescribed for depressed women in her day, was read as a horror story until recently reclaimed by feminist critics. But Gilman's work suffers equally from being read exclusively as feminist and not speculative, as well as from being isolated into the sub-sub-genre of "feminist utopias". In discussing this, I will be focusing on the dual context for the work, rather than primarily the writing itself.

One contextual problem in discussing Gilman's work is the lack of attention given to pulp writing of all kinds by and about women throughout the 19th Century. Surveys of women in science fiction, like the introduction to *Women of Wonder* (1974, ed. Pamela Sargent) or *The Feminine Eye* (1982, ed. Tom Staicar) skip from Mary Shelley to C. L. Moore as if nothing existed in between. A good example of what does exist to be reclaimed from this period is the collection of "blood and thunder" thrillers by Louisa Mae Alcott (*Behind a Mask*, 1975, ed. Madeleine Stern) which mix elements of horror, adventure, detection, realism, and fantasy.

The writings of women working in "popular" forms during this time need reprinting, anthologizing, and introducing into the critical spectrum. Gilman's writing suffers partly from an underappreciation that applies to the period of her lifetime as a whole. Roger Scholbin's bibliography in *Future Females* (1981, ed. Marlene Barr) does list some titles published between the 1890s and the 1940s, including Gilman's three utopian novels, *Moving the Mountain* (1911), *Herland* (1915), and *With Her in Ourland* (1916).

A second factor in evaluating Gilman's work is that it overlaps two separated categories, utopian speculation and women's fiction. While there are numerous volumes in print discussing fiction by and about women, most of them do not mention speculative writing or any kind of "genre" writing at all. Many stick closely to the token greats--the Brontes, Jane Austen, et al--or the recently canonized, like Kate Chopin. Science fiction criticism, on the other hand, generally makes little or no reference to the long history of women's writing and activism which would place feminist work in larger perspective.

This separation of the spheres is based on artificial delineation of "literature" from SF, mystery and detective fiction, westerns, gothic/romance, and so on. Categories are also created within categories, so that feminist or women's writing of all kinds are corralled into sub-genres. Women's studies often walks a difficult balance between showcasing and self-direction and containment.

Gilman's work is particularly misserved by categorizing. In her essay, "The Fictional World of Gilman", for instance, Ann Lane rightly points out how basic speculation is to Gilman's work:

Gilman used fiction as a device to offer an answer to the question she always posed: "But what if...?" What if she wants a family and a career, and her husband-to-be objects. What if her children are grown up and she is bored?...

What if she does not have the patience to rear the child she loves? What if the work she desperately wants takes her away from the man she loves?...If there were not many models after which young women could fashion a new way of life, then Gilman would create them in fiction.

Yet Lane does not connect Gilman's "social science fiction" with either earlier or later work in a similar vein.

Similarly, Joanna Russ mentions *Herland* as an antecedent in her discussion of "Recent Feminist Utopias" in *Future Females*, but of Gilman's social commentary, still considered among the most influential feminist writing of this century, Russ says that Gilman was "responding" to the women's movement of her own time. In Gilman's work, these two areas--futurist speculation and feminist analysis--are fused and cannot be completely separated without some distortion.

In the utopian tradition, the personal always forms the political. Sir Thomas More created a world in *Utopia* that he found personally congenial, and so did Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Her works are the tools of both her political stands and her personal quest, and she churned out stories and novels not only to propagandize, but also to explain and support her choices in life. The link between "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Gilman's own ordeal is often cited. But that's just one example of how speculative reformation of her own life informed her writing. Gilman was a thoroughly recognizable modern woman who pumped iron, planned a career, had doubts about marriage, stage-managed a no-fault divorce and gave up custody of her child, and finally took her own life to avoid an agonizing death by cancer. She was as well known as Gloria Steinem is today, and she suffered public abuse as an "unnatural mother" (the title of one of her stories) and a deviate from true womanhood. Gilman's fiction shows her actively transferring the issues of her day and life into plot and character.

The early 20th Century was the heyday of "social housekeeping", the extension of woman's responsibility for the welfare of her family to the welfare of her community and nation. One result was the avid formation of women's clubs for reform and service. Gilman, in *Women and Economics* (1898), applauded the club movement as "one of the most important sociological phenomena of the century" because they brought women "out of the sacred selfishness of the home and into the broader contact and relationship essential to social progress".

Like the women of *Herland*, most of these activists were altruistic rather than feminist, concerned more with the needs of others than their own. In her role-reversal fantasy, "If I were a Man", Gilman endows her character with "'the social gift' and the love of 'society' that goes with it". Gilman must have had the clubwomen in mind in creating what her sexist character Terry calls the "Colonels", the middle-aged women of *Herland*:

Their attitude was not the rigid discipline of soldiers; there was no sense of compulsion about them. Terry's terms of a "vigilance committee" was highly descriptive. They had to meet some common

need for peril, all moved by precisely the same feelings, to the same end.

In *A History of Women in America* (1973), Carol Hymowitz and Michaela Weissman characterize social housekeepers as "morally superior, and less in need of personal autonomy". This reflected the Victorian ideal of the sexless, selfless "angel in the house" who symbolized purity on a pedestal above mortal--and male--failings.

Gilman constructed *Herland* as a devastating rebuttal to this hypocritical elevation. Here, Gilman says, is what you asked for--all the women want nothing more than to be mothers. In fact, they've based their entire culture on the principles of nurturance. What? You say there's no place left for men or "masculine" values? Well, be careful what you ask for....

A deep stream of sardonic humor runs through the total absence of sexuality in the women of *Herland*, a void that was supposed to exist in "good" women. Gilman had experienced this burden in her first marriage. When Van, Gilman's hero in *Herland*, tries to explain to his betrothed the "sweet intense joy of married lovers", he finds himself in a ludicrous dialog with the "angel" in the Victorian house.

"Do you mean", she asked quite calmly, as if I was not holding her cool firm hands in my hot and rather quivering ones, "that with you, when people marry, they go right on doing this in season and out of season, with no thought of children at all?"

As Van comments earlier, "It made me feel as, one might imagine, a man might feel who loved a goddess--not a Venus, though!"

Gilman's fiction is fun to read, from *Herland* to the "crazy quilt newspaper" in "When I was a Witch" in which all "intentional lies" turn scarlet, while "intrusion and entertainment" dye the newsprint blue. Her sly, breezy style--a kind of Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys Meet Germaine Greer--is a perfect foil for the political content of her work. Gilman worked to express her serious ideas entertainingly in a popular medium, and she succeeded. Her plain spoken, action-oriented fiction is more readable today than other utopian reprints from the time, like Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) or Mary Bradley Lane's *Mizora* (1890).

The fiction of Charlotte Perkins Gilman continues to introduce feminist readers to utopian and role-reversal traditions and to imaginative and playful approaches to feminism. At the same time, her fiction initiates SF readers in the tradition of fiction interfaced with feminist lives. Gilman deserves appreciation for reminding us that the feminist speculative herstory is wider and richer than is yet recognized, and that our fictional categories are made, not born, and sometimes need to be remade. Finally, as feminist commentators consistently point out, the issues on which Gilman built her "what ifs" have never been more current. Gilman's novels and short stories provide not only food for feminist thought, but one recipe for writing about these issues in speculative fiction.

# Katherine MacLean's Subtle

Katherine MacLean's gifts have been appreciated by the Science Fiction Writers of America, who awarded her a Nebula for the novella, "The Missing Man" in 1971, and by WisCon: MacLean was their very first Guest of Honor in 1977. However, considering her many splendid fictions, MacLean surely qualifies as an "under-appreciated" writer. As Hank Stine laments, "Unfortunately Ms. MacLean is not as well known among the general SF readership as she is among her colleagues".<sup>1</sup> He speculates that she has been neglected "because the time she takes to finely craft her stories prevents her output from being voluminous enough to keep her name constantly before the average fan's admittedly short attention span" (p. 189). His rationale is as good as any other. More important to the reader unfamiliar with MacLean is why her work should be appreciated. One of the strengths of MacLean's fictions is its variety; it is difficult to pigeonhole her writing. One thread runs through-out, however, and that is humor.

Humor is a commodity in short supply in contemporary science fiction. Perhaps the under-appreciation of humor helps explain the under-appreciation of MacLean. Her fiction runs the gamut from pun to irony. One need only glance at a few titles to appreciate her wit. For example, "Unhuman Sacrifice" is a story about an alien species that apparently sacrifices its young. Actually, the ritual of hanging preserves the aliens' intelligence; without the ritual, the young become non-sentient plants, unhuman. The unhuman sacrifice occurs when interfering homo sapiens prevent one of the young from participating. Young Spet becomes a sacrifice to human ignorance. MacLean plays with both words of the title to make fun of human preconceptions. Through her humor, she makes the reader question the meaning of "human" and "sacrifice". This brief paraphrase of the story may make it sound grim, rather than humorous. However, MacLean retains a light touch through-out. One of the interfering humans, Henderson, takes the plant that was Spet with him, and repeatedly attempts to engage it in conversation. It never responds, and the story concludes with his partner's revelation, "It's the wrong bush, but he'll never tell Henderson that".

MacLean uses humor in a similar fashion in "The Trouble With You Earth People", "Contagion", and "The Trouble With Treaties" (with Tom Condit). In each story, the humor entertains, but it is also used to make a serious point. In the collection's title story, "The Trouble With You Earth People", friendly but technologically advanced aliens have used television to interpret human culture. The reader is encouraged to laugh at the misinterpretations the aliens make until a scientist supports the television view of humanity. The alien's encounter with humans is emphasized by a TV western that repeats Earth's sentiments toward aliens. "No stranger can come into our town and talk like that-all...Draw, stranger!" (p. 21). MacLean's humor is seductive; she manages to make the reader laugh at human folly, using

our folly to entertain and to educate.

Similarly, in "Contagion",<sup>2</sup> MacLean satirizes human dependence on appearance. A ship of human colonists land on Minos, to find it has already been settled by humans who all look alike. Their scout, Pat Mead, inspires envy in the hearts of the men and lust in the women. One of the men exclaims "I wouldn't mind being a Mead myself!" (p. 157). Ironically, this wish is granted, for Mead's cells are contagious, just as earlier, his presence was. At the end of the story, all the humans on the ship are transformed into Meads. Again, the title's meaning is multilayered. It refers to Pat Mead's influence, his cells, and the fear the colonists feel when confronted with the alteration of their appearance.

The superficiality of appearance also informs "The Trouble With Treaties", in which a peaceful exploratory ship encounters belligerent aliens. The aliens refuse to be intimidated by the humans, who are unarmed and who appear powerless. However, the humans use the ship's pet cat to intimidate the alien. He immediately recognizes the cat as a superior being. "These Terran clowns had no rank, they were just pretending to be in charge", the alien thinks. "That creature, whatever else it was, was obviously aware of its own superiority, an officer or better" (p.99). With an accurate description of feline behavior, MacLean makes fun of depending on appearances. The technologically superior alien turns and runs, frightened by the cat's apparent arrogance. At the same time, the concept of pet "ownership" is ridiculed. The cat does indeed save the Earth, so the alien's description of its authority is not completely inaccurate. "The cats were spreading in a great and growing empire of power control that they thought they were free" (p. 101). At the end of the story, MacLean plays with this description when one of the humans asks "How come we do [keep pets]?" (p. 103). "The Trouble With Treaties" recalls Cordwainer Smith at his best, or one of Andre Norton's insouciant feline aliens.

In all three of these stories, MacLean uses humor to entrance while making a serious point. Both "Contagion" and "The Trouble With Treaties" expose the fallacy of judging on appearances. In "Contagion" personalities remain unchanged by the transformation into the Mead physique. The women's greater fear of transformation exposes the double standard of appearance for women. Through the defeat of the belligerent aliens in "The Trouble With Treaties", MacLean emphasizes the danger of being overawed by appearances and reminds humans that we already live peacefully with other species, our pets. Perhaps they, like the humans in the story, have merely outwitted a technologically superior species. The childlike behavior of the aliens in "The Trouble With You Earth People" frightens the humans, who precipitously reject the alien overtures. That the rejection comes from a well respected anthropologist stresses the blinding nature of human taboos. The story is humorous,

# Humor by Robin Roberts



Katherine MacLean

but at the same time a serious critique of our cultural negations. MacLean suggests that we are closer to our television archetypes than we are willing to admit.

The humor and social critique culminate in MacLean's Nebula Award-winning "The Missing Man" and the fix-up version, *The Missing Man*. Again the humor and message are closely related. The hero, telepathic George Sanford, has a mental block against filling out forms. The secretary, who keeps misspelling his name, gets agitated when he cannot account for his time, until his friend and co-worker Ahmed intervenes with creative accounting. Walking and thinking becomes research, "advising me how to find my way through walls" becomes "consulting"<sup>3</sup> for the forms. Ironically, the very government service that depends on George's unorthodox abilities cannot cope with accounting for his services. Through this humorous scene, MacLean criticizes the bureaucracy and its narrow approach to Rescue Service. She makes the same point when the rebel Larry reprograms the central computer to use good English. It starts using metaphors and quotes a Browning poem when asked about the ethics of brain-wiping. Funny as this response is, the anecdote emphasizes MacLean's theme: the importance of human adaptability. A computer that quotes Browning exposes the dangers of a rigidly structured technological society. MacLean criticizes rigidity in "soft" as well as "hard" sciences. An anthropologist rivals the stupidity of the social scientist in "The Trouble With You Earth People". George completes a daring and hazardous rescue of a hostage, only to hear a television anthropologist fitting his adventure into a false symbolical framework. The juxtaposition of George's actions and the commentary is exempt from the dangers of rigidity and blindness.

From puns to irony, MacLean stresses the importance of human flexibility and adaptability. Its significance can be seen in the title of her novel. "Missing Man" refers at various times to the kidnapped maintenance engineer, the head of the Arab Commune, George's best friend, George himself, and most significantly, George's identity. Throughout the novel, George locates missing people; last and most significant is his rediscovery and acceptance of his past and his full telepathic powers. His renunciation of his chance to control other humans reaffirms MacLean's message about accepting differences. In her short fiction, the theme is most often reiterated through loss. Earth loses the friendship and technology of an advanced race by its inability to accept the aliens of "The Trouble With You Earth People". Similarly, Henderson loses Spet to vegetation when he refuses to accept an alien ritual. *The Missing Man* shows what can be gained from tolerance. George Sanford finds himself and gains full control of his telepathic powers. Through her use of humor, MacLean asserts "privacy is the foundation of the right to be different" (p. 58). In *The Missing Man* and her short fiction, she resembles Ursula K. Le Guin, a much appreciated writer. They share an appreciation for the "female principle" that is "basically anarchic. It values order without constraint, rule by custom not force".<sup>4</sup>

# Appreciating

Karen Lee Killough has now been writing science fiction professionally for 14 years, having seen her first appearance in *Analog* in 1970. She has not been one of the more productive writers, with four novels and less than two dozen short stories scattered over the years. Unfortunately, to be a really well known author in this genre, one must be productive in addition to writing well, and Killough's generally high quality work tends to be forgotten far too soon.

One of the best of her works, for example, is an early unreprinted story titled "Caravan". Set on an alien world, Killough brings a culture to life in a minimum of words, working the setting and the plot--a perilous desert crossing--into a blend so that the menaces (sand whales, quicksand, raiders, a storm, and uncooperative passengers) enhance the setting as well as further the plot.

There is considerable thought at work in the construction of her stories as well. "Sentience" concerns a race of winged aliens who begin to develop intelligence because of the presence of humans on their world, even though they were not sentient at the time of human arrival. The familiar plot gimmick, to intervene in a growing culture or not, rears its familiar head, but in a different guise. The aliens themselves want the clandestine contact of humans to continue in the story's sequel, the novel *The Monitor, the Miners, and the Shree*. Now that their world has been declared off limits, human contact may disappear and the stimulus to intelligence may depart as well. The protagonist now finds herself in an ethical quandry. What course of action is in the best interests of the Shree?

Killough has also written a number of short stories loosely related to each other, and reminiscent in many ways of the Vermilion Sands stories of J. G. Ballard or Michael Coney's Peninsula. The Aventine is a community of scholars of sorts, artists, people from the performing arts. "The Siren Garden", for example, deals with a woman who traps the lead character into unwitting participation in the murder of her husband, by means of a garden of crystalline statues. There is a haunting atmosphere to this and most of the other Aventine stories, although the ending is rather telegraphed in this case.

Killough was more successful with "Achro-nos", one of the only four of her stories to be reprinted by other editors. A painter finds himself temporarily suspended in time with a group of ageless refugees from the end of the world. Once again, the protagonist is forced against his will to participate in a destructive manipulative game. This theme repeats in "A House Divided", one of her best. A beautiful but reticent woman arrives in the Aventine and begins to develop her relationship with a man of her own age. Eventually he realizes that the woman is a schizophrenic, and he is drawn into the conflict between the two disparate personalities, ultimately becoming the tool as one seeks to destroy the other.

Killough's first two novels appeared in 1979; both of them were quite good, better in fact than her third and fourth. *A Voice Out of Ramah* is a fairly standard adventure story, handled extremely well. A young woman travels to a colony world which is dominated by a ruthless male theocracy. Early in its history, the colony was ravaged by a plague that wiped out 90% of the male population. Now the priesthood secretly maintains their scarcity by poisoning most of the males who are born, and blaming it all on the plague.

Outside contact is a serious threat to the power structure, particularly when one of the priests becomes disenchanted with the system and contacts the outworlder for help. Disguised as a woman, he must hide from the authorities until their power can be neutralized. Despite some minor inconsistencies and the difficulty I had believing that this kind of plot could be kept a secret for so many generations, I found it to be one of the better first novels I'd read.

The follow up later that same year was even better. *The Doppelganger Gambit* is a blend of mystery and science fiction. It is obligatory at this point to refer to Asimov's *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun*, and indeed in this particular case the comparison is more than usually valid. Just as Lije Baley had his intelligent but unconventional partner, R. Daneel Olivaw, so does Detective Janna Brill have hers in Mahlon "Mama" Maxwell.

Asimov wrote what were essentially locked room murder mysteries, however; Lee Killough has written what is, in the mystery genre, referred to as a police procedural. There is no tough private eye, just two professional police officers. They work in a near future Kansas City, where the petroleum shortage has turned the private automobile into a dinosaur; hovercars and the universal credit card are the order of the day. When a prominent businessman is killed, the immediate suspect is his partner, but the activity on his credit card "proves" that he was nowhere near the scene of the crime. Or does it?

As in many police procedurals, we know who the murderer is, and we know how it was committed. The mystery here is not who or how, but to anticipate the methods by which the protagonists will discover the truth. *The Doppelganger Gambit* is an extremely good blend of the genres, and a fine novel as well, and I still have hopes that Brill and Maxwell will return in further works.

Killough's fourth novel is also a science fiction/murder mystery blend. *The Deadly Silents* is a more ambitiously plotted work, more reminiscent of Bester's *The Demolished Man* than of Asimov this time, but doesn't work as well in either genre. An alien race that is almost 100% telepathic is beginning to experience crime, and they are completely incapable of dealing with it. They import a human hired-police force to try to straighten things out, but soon the police themselves become the tar-

# Lee Killough

by Don D'Ammassa



gets for a string of murders. Although there are some nice touches--particularly in those scenes dealing with interrogation of telepathic witnesses the novel is not nearly as entertaining as her earlier works.

On the other hand, Killough's stories have continued to improve in quality. She continues to explore the interface between SF and myste-

ries in "Corpus Cryptic", for example, in which murder is committed by means of a matter transmitter. She has even married the mystery to the traditional ghost story in her best short piece yet, "The Existential Man", wherein the ghost of a murdered policeman returns to solve the mystery of his own death.

Nor has she abandoned the Aventine, and a collection of stories in that setting has also appeared. "Bete Et Noir" features a dramatic presentation created to coerce a murderous vengeance.

Most recently she has begun to write in the field of heroic fantasy. "Soul Slayer" is a quite traditional story of a warrior rescuing a loved one, but in this case it is a woman rescuing her imperilled husband. An excellent story as well is "The Leopard's Daughter", a heroic fantasy with barbarian battles and a fascinating tribe of men who are invisible on one side.

It appears that Killough is still feeling her way around, still trying to discover just what kind of fiction she wants to write. Or perhaps it is that she doesn't wish to be confined to a predetermined type of story. The overall quality of her work, in whatever area she has tried so far, has been considerably above average, and it will certainly be interesting to see which direction her writing takes next.

*Killough Bibliography on p. 36*

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## Words Stain

by Terry A. Garey

*words stain a quiet morning like wounds  
a plot gathers around songs never sung on pages  
I pull hanks of story around me  
like a quilt  
I build in the dark  
sparks  
from the fire saved inside me  
ignite into a glow  
that traces dreams in white and gold*

*The day comes down in one sentence:  
"Toledo and Mahkree left the  
City of Potele, not hearing her  
disappointed cries as they trudged  
through the dawn to the mountains."*

*Is this more than the edges of my dreams?  
outer walls are constructed to please the eye  
Tongue and fingertips  
inner recesses are for my own imaginings  
details no one wants to hear:  
love songs whispered in a dungeon  
spilled on a floor of verbs*

*c. 1984, Terry A. Garey*

# Free Radical: Miriam Allen de Ford

She was "the Grand Old Lady of science fiction writers", "a writer's writer", if ever there was one—but I had never heard of Miriam Allen deFord until a friend lent me *Xenogenesis*.

Survey articles about the place of women in science fiction often claim that, prior to the 60s, female writers had to disguise their sex behind androgynous or frankly masculine pen names—yet Miriam Allen deFord published her first SF story in 1946 and had over 70 titles in SF magazines and anthologies before her death in 1975, all under her own name. But I have yet to find deFord mentioned in those survey articles.

"I am against racial, sexual and chronological discrimination of every variety," she told the editors of *Contemporary Authors* in 1963, before such positions were popularly voiced. She was 75 years old at the time.

*Xenogenesis* showed me some of deFord's most intriguing stories about alternate sex roles, modes of reproduction, marital and social arrangements. Who was this author? I knew of very little SF on such themes prior to the 60s, yet the copyright dates revealed that she had been speculating on ideas during the 50s which must have made quite an impression even in this tolerant genre. Her biographical dates were even more amazing: 1888 to 1975. She published her first SF story at the age of 58, and was still hard at it when she died, 86 years old.

Who was Miriam Allen deFord, and why has her work disappeared? Why don't I find her name mentioned among "women in science fiction"? Is her writing still of interest? What can we learn by examining her career?

Miriam Allen deFord was an extraordinary woman for any time. She says she became a feminist at the age of six. The daughter of two Philadelphia physicians, she grew up assuming she would support herself. She began volunteer work with the suffragists in 1902, at the age of 14, and resisted parental pressure towards a medical career to accept a newspaper job at 18: ". . . it was a chance to write and be published and that's all I was interested in." She put herself through college by a combination of newspaper work and various odd jobs, all of which provided material for her writing. Meanwhile she marched in suffragist rallies and spoke from soap boxes.

When she married a charming anarchist she knew what to do to avoid the motherhood which she never considered an acceptable option for herself. The "Dutch pessary" she obtained was as much against the law in 1915 Boston as anarchist bombs. By the time she divorced this husband in 1921, she was already living with labor movement activist Maynard Shipley, who became her second husband.

DeFord credits Shipley with reawakening her interest in science and thus indirectly leading her to science fiction. During the 30s she and Shipley hacked out Little Blue Books at \$50 apiece to supplement their respective incomes as labor journalist and lecturer. While she wrote Latin translations and autobiographies (some of which became hardcover books), Shipley wrote on scientific topics. She typed and read his manuscripts; she had a radical twist to her mind. Science fiction was the logical outlet for her speculations.

"The Last Generation?" appeared in the November 1946 issue of *Harper's Magazine*, a monthly of national and general circulation. Amidst pre-Christmas advertisements and articles reflecting the exhaustion and relief of the post-WW2 period, it must have been a shocker.

DeFord's story tells of the after-effects of a 1975 experimental bomb test gone awry. "The unmanageable and unpredictable rays" resulted in worldwide sterilization of all mammals. With typical dry efficiency she catalogues the social, economic, and political ramifications of this disaster. I can only imagine the impact of this story on *Harper's* readers, at a time when America still had the monopoly on the atomic bomb - and on the guilt which followed its use.

*Fantasy and Science Fiction* reprinted "The Last Generation" in 1950, and from then on deFord's SF stories appeared regularly in the best known genre magazines! *F&SF*, *Galaxy*, *Fantastic Universe*, etc. Each story typically explored an idea which I believe must have been fairly radical for its day. By 1970 over 67 stories had appeared. Some of the best she collected in *Xenogenesis* (Ballantine 1969) and the hardback *Elsewhere, Elsewhen, Elsehow* (Walker 1971). At least ten additional stories have been anthologized in as many hardback anthologies and uncounted paperbacks. She edited the anthology *Space Time and Crime* (Paperback Library 1964) including one of her own SF-mystery stories.

Yet all of these books are currently out of print, available only through libraries and collectors' catalogs. The magazines containing her other stories appear in the catalogs, but her name is not among the authors listed to attract buyers' attention. Why has such a prolific, controversial, and well-respected writer disappeared from our awareness of women's contributions to science fiction?

She told her biographer, Sherna Gluck, that throughout her long career as a writer she never experienced sexual discrimination herself. She claimed, ". . . there's no trouble at all about becoming a successful writer if you can produce."

And deFord could produce. "Over the years I've written just about everything.

## by Fran Stallings

When people ask me what kind of writing I do, I say, 'I do hash'." She was most widely recognized for her detective crime and fiction, which received numerous awards. Anthony Boucher, longtime editor of *F&SF*, wrote: "For at least a quarter of a century Miss de Ford has been steadily producing some of the best American short stories of crime and suspense." *Contemporary Authors* lists 20 books, not counting the Little Blue Books, mostly biography and non-fiction; two are still in print. I recommend *Who was when? A Dictionary of Contemporaries* to anyone who writes "alternate history" SF. Her work appeared in every sort of periodical and at least 100 anthologies. Radio and television bought her fiction. Gluck reports that at age 85 deFord was still writing at her ancient Royal from six to eighteen hours a day. A few weeks before her death March 22, 1975, under a nurse's care and no longer able to type, she was still writing by dictation. Where has it all gone?

Miriam Allen deFord deserves our renewed attention for several reasons. First, of great interest to other women writers, is the example of her lifelong career as a free-lancer. One obituary called her "'a writer's writer' if ever there was one — colorful, varied, indefatigable, scholarly — by her passing we have lost a true professional and a warm personality."

I can't help believing that her contribution to the SF genre surely must have smoothed the path for the women who followed.

I was especially impressed with her age at entry into the field. I had felt too old a dog at 40 for the new tricks of writing SF myself. Years of research reports and news releases seemed poor preparation for fiction. Having devoured SF all my reading life, though, I could hardly write anything else. deFord published her first SF at 58. I adopted her as posthumus mentor.

deFord herself is a foremother we can be glad to know and claim. Her personal statements as well as her stories reveal a person concerned about "human beings as human beings . . . against minority status of any kind . . ." Stories in *Elsewhere...* criticized racism, xenophobia, and pollution. *Xenogenesis* — meaning "strange birth" — included comment on the assumptions of male dominance, future reproductive/marital arrangements on earth, and alien life-cycles on other planets. A veteran of the first women's movement, she had already re-visioned perspectives the second movement had to discover again.

How interesting are her stories today, though, in the drying wake of the New Wave? How does the quality of her writing compare with work widely recognized as "classic"?

deFord apparently had little interest in stylistic experimentation for its own sake.



George Schnobrich

Miriam Allen de Ford in her 20's and 80's

A few stories are written in a novel voice: for instance "All in Good Time" (*Xenogenesis*), is related through a law professor's lecture. Most use straight-forward narrative. They are idea stories rather than character or mood pieces. She was, after all, already well established in several other genres and entered SF to experiment in ideas. With consummate competence she gives us just enough dialog, detail, and action to set up the idea for our (sometimes surprised) discovery.

Could this be a clue to her disappearance? Ideas which were startling become part of our mental tool-kit, and the credit for bringing them to our attention declines to merely historical interest. Yet I found deFord's treatment of her ideas interesting in itself, and still worth reading.

Another clue: guidelines from one current SF magazine sneer at the "All Is Revealed" plot where the whole story comes

Continued on p. 21

# The Poet Dreams:

In and about the fog-shrouded borderlands and uncharted interiors of speculative poetry, many fine women poets reside. There is Diane Ackerman, whose classic *The Planets: A Cosmic Pastoral* deals in straight scientific imagery. There are other science poets like Lucille Day, *Self-Portrait with Hand Microscope*; and Helen Ehrlich and Laura Fargas, whose "Two Sonnets" and "The Island of Geologic Time" respectively were top-notch pieces in *Science '83*. Other well-known poets from outside of the science and science fictional circles vacillate in and out, like Marilyn Hacker, Adrienne Marcus, Marge Piercy, and Wendy Rose. Some highly visible SF prose authors lead dual lives with the line and stanza: Phyllis Gottlieb, Ursula K. Le Guin, Jane Yolen, and Suzette Haden Elgin, who founded the Science Fiction Poetry Association and the Rhysling Awards. The SF small press cultivates many careers, notably of Ruth Berman, Terry A. Garey, Janet Fox, Elissa Hamilton Malcohm, and Kathryn Rantala. One poet straddles all these geographic delineations: Sonya Dorman.

Sonya writes short SF prose, and has a novel, *Planet Patrol*. She has three mainstream poetry collections. She publishes in the SF small press, especially in the long-running poetry magazines *Speculative Poetry Review*, *Umbral*, *Uranus*, and *Velocities*. In this appreciation, I would like to concentrate on her work in the professional SF arena.

In "Vanishing Points", Sonya deals with metaphysical horizons:

by the beads in my spine  
lonesome abacus  
I count the stars  
seek passage through heaps  
older than history  
find a man who walks  
a smoking rope

The narrator, and the poet, are both pushing at their limitations.

"The Child Dreams" undermines societal role-modeling, since, with the advent of space exploration, a girl child can dream of more glamorous fantasies than princes and debutante balls:

The prince is a figment  
of our boring legends, he is  
the gravity her sleep-ship  
may escape from. Dressed  
in a red shift, she's always  
a world ahead of his weight.  
The child dreams for us all.

Her Rhysling Award winning "Corruption of Metals", a deceptively simple still life, depicts the rusting hulks in a starship junkyard:

The cameras dream of space  
the way captains  
in the black silence  
once thought of the earth.

## Essay on Elements

by Sonya Dorman

on high slopes in the Rockies  
green as sage the graves  
are stopped with riptap  
at the foot to keep old settlers  
from marching down again

toward plains  
whose bellies lift  
to the cyanic sky

last seen before the night  
silver threads spewed out  
from our high flights  
tarnish in the great space

groves of stars pulse  
in the hydrogen forest

-*Velocities* #4, 1984



# Sonya Dorman

by Robert Frazier

The static description evokes a surprisingly powerful emotional tone.

Sonya Dorman's most visible tie with the genre is with *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Over two decades, her poems have appeared with regularity (regular for *F & SF* that is). Some excellent examples are: "A Lullaby, A Farewell", and the autobiographical science poem "The Marriage of Art and Science":

We lean together over furing acid  
over the Bunsen burner's small roar  
stare out through a lens  
to star's fire  
taking turns with the same equipment  
you rise from your studies  
holding a new crystal's growth  
and I sink back  
from my labors with a poem in my mouth

We see, perhaps, a bit of background for why Sonya employs so many speculative elements in her work.

Her most recent entry in *F & SF*, the Rhysling Award finalist "Star Stories", combines two pieces. One is allegorical, sub-titled "The Death of Childhood", and it characterizes a kidnapped star princess who holds steadfast to herself, even when her home (planet) is threatened:

"With one strike", he tells her,  
"we'll split it open." But she can't  
worship their groins or machines.

The other piece, "Your Stars Tomorrow", generalizes that rite of passage into the death of ignorance:

Slowly, we revolve all night lighted  
on the other side by a single star  
while hydrogen rampages through the  
universe.

No one dreams it's dangerous here. The counterpoint, the resonance, between these two poems is particularly pertinent in the nuclear age, for we cannot afford ignorance or complacency. We must remain steadfast to truth and good sense. "Star Stories" contains original thought, a sense of wonder, and a human theme of value. It would make a fair yardstick by which to judge *SF* poetry.

Over a period of 15 years, Sonya Dorman consistently produced poetry of excellence, much of which is informed with enough science, and reference to science fictional elements, to be considered speculative. Steve Rasnic Tem considered Sonya one of the four major speculative poets in his *Umbra Anthology*; and I have given her poetry considerable space in my anthology *Burning with a Vision*, upcoming in 1984 from Owlswick Press. If, in fact, we can count the seminal *SF* poets on one hand, Sonya Dorman might well be the index finger. She continues to point the way.

*Dorman Bibliography on p. 36*

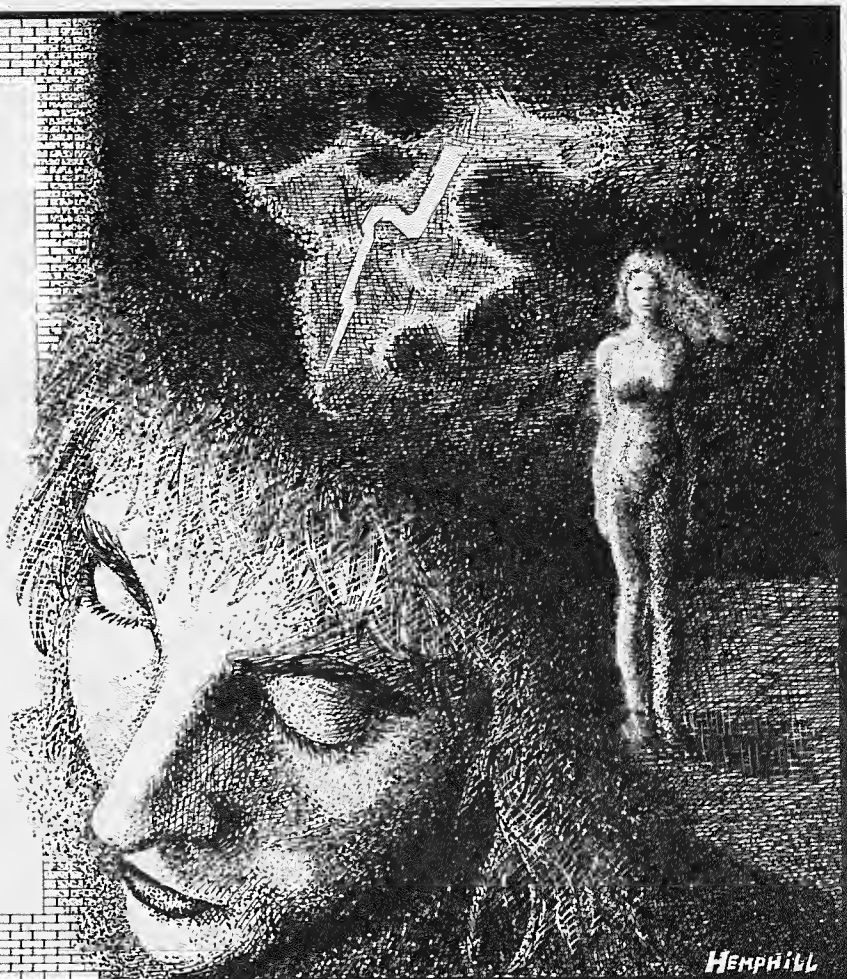


Steven Fox

# My Asylum

by Diane Webster

*Lightning stabs behind my eyes,  
and I become Wonder Woman.  
I throw a right cross  
and explode from prison.  
I run the mile in a minute flat,  
hurdle the ten foot fence.  
The padded peephole  
blinks open, blinks shut.  
I can hardly hold  
my laughter.  
They will never know  
Wonder Woman escaped.*



Phebe Hemphill

Continued from p. 18

together on the last page. Such plots were a mainstay of many 50s SF writers and, as may be expected of a writer who won awards for her suspense and mysteries, deFord used them often. Perhaps many of deFord's stories seem old-fashioned to the sophisticated reader who has "already done that".

Certainly today's experienced SF reader appreciates complex plots and subtle styles which can make older SF seem shallow and quaint. I have found circumstances, however, where this simplicity is a positive value.

The beginning writer tries to learn by analyzing good stories, and I can recommend deFord's as models of clarity. The central idea can be dissected out as cleanly as the pit of a freestone peach. You can try to reconstruct how idea led to plot, plot demanded characters, characters required setting and dialog, and suddenly the story started to move. I realize that many authors use an opposite process, beginning with a snatch of dialog or a character who demands that her story be told. That, perhaps, is the way of greater artistry; but it eludes student analysis.

Stories from the adolescence of the genre also lend themselves well to adolescent readers. A friend who teaches 8th grade science likes to read SF to her homeroom students, but has trouble finding stories they can follow aurally.

Most of the excellent literary SF we enjoy is too subtle and complex for this. The students get confused, then bored, then disgusted. DeFord stories, closer to the oral storytelling tradition, are more accessible — and the ideas, still fresh to genre novices, provoke good discussions.

I feel Miriam Allen deFord's stories are worth seeking out. I hope her collections will be reprinted. She herself seems to have been such a valued and respected professional writer that her absence from analyses of important women in SF is puzzling.

At OKON'83 a panel of writers was asked, "Should the beginner work on many short stories or concentrate on a novel?" They replied more-or-less unanimously that you must write what you do best. However, one of them cautioned, if you write nothing but short stories your name will soon be forgotten.

Perhaps this, more than any other factor, explains what became of Miriam Allen deFord: she wrote no novels. The authors seriously discussed in review articles wrote major novels; deFord's SF books were all collections and anthologies.

This may be a lesson to us all, from an illustrious foremother who should not be forgotten.

# The Businessman and His Wife

by Janice Rosenberg



There was once upon a time a businessman named Dudley, who lived with his wife and child in an undistinguished tract house on Long Island, not too far from New York City, as the crow flies. Every day he took his attache case, kissed his wife and baby good-bye, and fought the traffic on the Long Island Expressway into the city and his job in lower Manhattan.

One day, after his usual light lunch, he stepped into the restaurant cloakroom, which was oddly unattended at that moment. *Perhaps the girl has gone to the ladies' room,* he thought, irritated at having to find his own coat, but thinking that he would save a 50¢ tip.

In the small dusty room he hunted among the Burberry raincoats in shades of tan and black, until he located his own somewhat soiled London Fog. As he was shrugging into it, he turned toward the back of the narrow space and noticed a woman holding several packages, and making a valiant effort to slide her arms into the sleeves of her suede wrap coat.

"Here, let me help you," Dudley said.

"Why, thank you," the woman answered.

When she turned around, Dudley saw that her attractive face was familiar. One of my wife's friends, he wondered, whistling, as was his way when puzzled.

"Say," he asked, pointing at her, "aren't you Lila Wells?" He had seen her picture on the cover of *Newsweek* and her name appeared in the papers all of the time as the country's leading proponent of feminist activism.

"Yes, I am," she answered, "and you are the first man in about 10 years who's helped me with my coat."

She tied her belt and started past him toward the door of the restaurant, then turned back.

"By the way, what is that song you're whistling? It sounds like something I once knew."

Dudley whistled a little of it to remind himself. "It's 'I Enjoy Being a Girl'."

"How silly of me to have forgotten," Lila laughed. "Thanks again."

Dudley watched her go with regret, thinking of the interesting conversation they might have had. It wasn't often, even in New York, that he met such a famous person. *And to think, she let me hold her coat,* he mused.

That evening, at home, Dudley stood at the kitchen sink holding his damp baby and

drinking a can of Schaeffer's. His wife, Sheila, was busy preparing a tuna casserole for their dinner.

"So," she said, "What fabulous adventures did you have in the Big City while I was here washing diapers and scrubbing floors?"

"You'll never guess who I met at lunch today," Dudley said. He paused, but Sheila continued to pound a package of frozen peas, trying to dislodge a few from the icy block. "Lila Wells."

"Lila Wells!" Sheila dropped the peas, causing a number of them to mix with the coffee grounds that clogged the drain. "Where did you see her?"

"In the restaurant cloakroom after lunch. I was getting my coat and she was struggling with hers, so I helped her. She said that no man had done that for her in 10 years."

Sheila stared at him. "Didn't you ask her for a favor in return?"

"A favor? I never thought of that. She thanked me and she's so pretty up close. Why did I need a favor?"

"You meet Lila Wells out on a business lunch while I'm here eating peanut butter and you don't ask for anything? Go find her again tomorrow. I want the name of a good housekeeper."

*How will I do that,* Dudley wondered, but he knew better than to argue with Sheila. He didn't care to sleep on the den couch.

The next day after lunch at the same restaurant, Dudley was back in the cloakroom. *Hat check girl must have quit,* he thought, as he absentmindedly whistled "I Enjoy Being A Girl."

"Why, it's you again," he heard from the back of the coat racks. Lila stepped out, her coat already on.

"Yes. Hello." Dudley stammered. "I hate to ask this of you, Lila, but my wife wants to know the name of a good housekeeper. She's buried in work right now with the baby and all, so if you wouldn't mind . . ."

"Certainly." Lila took out a slim gold Cross pen and a small note pad printed "From the Desk of Lila Wells," and scribbled a name and number.

"Thanks so much, Lila," Dudley said.

"Quite all right," Lila answered with a quick smile as she left the cloakroom.

Sheila called the number that night and within three days a charming woman was appearing at their house two mornings a week to clean and babysit while Sheila took courses in computer systems at the local YMCA. Now when Dudley came home, at least two nights a week, the house was shining, dinner prepared, and the baby cooing in a fresh sleeper. *That was a good idea,* he thought, and all went well for about a semester.

One night after dinner, Sheila came over to sit in Dudley's lap as he smoked his pipe and watched the six o'clock news.

"Honey," she said, stroking his thinning hair, "Do you think that Lila Wells could find me a job? My course is over and I'm ready to go to work."

"Lila Wells! What do you think, that I see her every day? Those two meetings were just accidental."

"Well, find her again," Sheila told him. "I want a high paying job in computer analysis and I want it to be with a big company in Manhattan."

All the next morning at his desk Dudley worried about how he was to locate Lila. His only clue to her whereabouts was the cloakroom in his favorite restaurant. What else was there about the two meetings that made them similar?

*Both times it was raining,* he thought, remembering all those Burberry coats. *And I was whistling. What tune was that? She asked me about it.* Dudley smiled to himself and pictured Ann-Margaret, her long legs prancing across the screen on her television special while she sang the song.

After eating his chef's salad, Dudley anxiously made his way to the cloakroom. It was filled with dripping umbrellas and hats. He began to whistle as he pulled his coat from the rack, and sure enough, Lila materialized in the back of the closet-like space.

"Hello again," she said cheerfully. "How did the housekeeper work out?"

"She's wonderful," Dudley said, relieved that she had begun the conversation. "But my wife is interested in a job in the computer field. Something important and interesting, in Manhattan. Do you know of anything?"

"Why, yes," Lila said. Again she gave Dudley a slip of paper on which she'd written a name and number. "Have her call that number. I'm sure there'll be an opening for a woman who has as much skill as your wife."

A week later, Sheila began her position at Words, Inc. She was in charge of a whole room of computers and loved every minute of it. The housekeeper came every day now, and when Dudley arrived home shortly after Sheila, she handed each of them a perfect martini. While they sipped in the spotless living room, a gourmet dinner that she had cooked earlier warmed in their new microwave. *This is the life,* Dudley thought.

Not too long after that, Dudley was lying on the couch digesting boeuf bourguignon and reading Alvin Toffler's *Third Wave* when Sheila wandered into the room.

"Dudley, I've decided that I want to be the chairman of the board of Words, Inc."

"What! You've only been there two months."

"What difference does that make? I'm sure your friend Lila can help out."

Before Dudley could protest, Sheila had removed the book from his hands and begun tickling the hair on his chest. As she planted her mouth on his, he thought, *What the hell? It's the least Lila can do for the guy who helped her with her coat.*

The cloakroom had a sinister appearance as Dudley entered it on the next rainy day, three days later. He didn't want to mess around this time, so he started whistling right away, poking among the coats with the pointed end of his automatic umbrella.

"Hey," a female voice said. Then Lila stepped out, a yellow vinyl hat on her head. "Oh, it's you again. What now?"

"Sheila wants to be chairman of the board," Dudley said quickly, a slight smile curving and uncurving his lips. He shrugged his shoulders. What's a guy going to do, he tried to imply.

"I guess I can manage it," Lila said, after a moment. "Here, help me get my coat on."

Sure enough, a week later the present chairman retired, and Sheila was appointed amidst shouts of acclaim from her co-workers, and words of praise in the local business newspapers.

Now, often, when Dudley returned home, Sheila was not there. She had evening meetings and would come home exhausted at ten o'clock. Dudley and the baby ate their paté together and then watched sit-com reruns, yawning and feeling cranky.

"You know, Sheila," he told her one night, as she snuggled against his back in bed, "This chairman of the board routine is beginning to get on my nerves. We hardly see you anymore."

"Yes," Sheila answered. "I'm not too crazy about the hours either, but after I have my picture on the cover of *Time* I'll probably be offered a position with more power and better secretarial help."

Dudley rolled over to look at her. *She'd have to remove that face cream before they photographed her*, he thought.

"That's wonderful, sweetheart," he said. "When will that be?"

"You'll have to ask your pal Lila that question," Sheila replied, yawning and closing her eyes. In a few minutes she was snoring.

New York in a lunch time thunderstorm is not a pleasant place. Even after three cups of coffee, Dudley shivered at the thought of venturing back into the street.

"I Enjoy Being a Girl" was wearing thin as he whistled it in the cloakroom for the fifth time while wrapping a scarf securely around his neck. Sure enough, Lila appeared near him, her shapely figure in a knit suit about to be covered by her coat. Dudley held her sleeves.

"Shoot," she said.

"Sheila wants to be on the cover of *Time* magazine," Dudley mumbled.

"June eleventh," was all that Lila said before ducking out of the cloakroom.

When Dudley arrived home on June twelfth, a huge blowup of the *Time* cover hung over their freestanding metal fireplace.

"You look beautiful, Sheila," he said. She sat to the left of the picture, smiling an identical smile. "Are you happy now?"

"Yes. But I've decided that this house is too small for us. I want to move to Scarsdale. I plan to run for the House of Representatives next fall, and that's an excellent district."

"Do you think that you have the political base for that already?" Dudley asked. Boy, am I a jerk, he thought. *I'm going to ask Lila to support her.*

"You're going to ask Lila to support me. With that I can't possibly lose."

"Sheila, don't you think the cover of

*Time* is enough? We can get a bigger house, but I'm happy with the way things are now. I don't want to move to Washington."

"Dudley, I will not rest until I'm in the House. After that we can see."

"This is absolutely it, Sheila," Dudley said. He'd had enough. Besides that, the restaurant had changed hands and he didn't like eating Iranian food for lunch. The one time he'd tried it, he'd had three straight days of heartburn.

It was a foul and black day when Dudley entered the cloakroom once more. He'd eaten a strange and spicy mix of unidentifiable vegetables and meat, and was beginning to burp already. He reached into his coat pocket for his Roloids, and while chewing three, began to whistle.

"Well, what does she want now?" Lila's lovely face was creased and pale from the exertion of putting on her coat over her linen suit.

"She wants to move to Scarsdale and be their Representative in Washington."

"What!" Lila's pale face turned red with anger. "That's my district and I'm going to have that seat. Go home to Sheila tonight and see how you find her."

Lila vanished in a cloud of Chanel.

That night when Dudley arrived home, the baby was crying and he could smell food burning in the microwave. Sheila stood at the sink barefoot and seven months pregnant, peeling potatoes in their little house on Long Island. And there they are living still at this very time.

The End

## *I Dig for Words* by Terry A. Garey

*I dig for words,  
lifting them from the dark dirt--  
good words, bad words,  
words I can use in my secret places,  
bread packed into wounds,  
burning rainbows scattering ash  
on a woman's last chance*

*I run for them along the sea  
sawing through grass  
spraying through sand  
finding words layered into fossil cliffs  
whalebone  
washed from hiding*

*words to build me  
make me fill me*

*say me*

*words I can chew at night  
weapons...blankets...food*

*they are the stars I count  
before sleep  
my own galaxy maps  
homegrown for the stars*

c. 1984, Terry A. Garey

Wendy Rose



# A Biased Review (for Wendy Rose)

by Terry A. Garey

*I can see, singer,  
how you wove the blanket  
stripe by stripe--  
using all the rainbows you had ever found...*

*spinning out of your fingers like blood tempered into sand  
by the heat  
came all the words*

*spindle drops and spins from your mouth  
weft and warp strong as guitar strings  
your back holds the loom in place, hard bones  
are the sticks, bone from your own arms,  
tough from being too empty*

*the tension comes from life in all colors, all shades,  
from pens and brushes no one*

*could give you  
I can see you sweat in the sunset,  
pack it all down with the heddle  
beat it firmly into place...  
you break the threads when they get thin  
twisted  
or too young*

*you tear the blanket into strips  
to bind the blood back into your arms and legs  
wept as the colors, sand and sky, copper and coral  
changed with stain*

*ripped by your teeth  
edges dragged through salt,  
red mud,  
trash along the roads*

*you smoothed with your singer fingers, remove  
ravels into fringe  
carefully knotted by memory, touch, taste,  
pure scent of turquoise  
and you used it--  
you used it proudly  
for your shawl at a round dance,  
facing the dawn, singing*

*warm at last*

c. 1984, Terry A. Garey

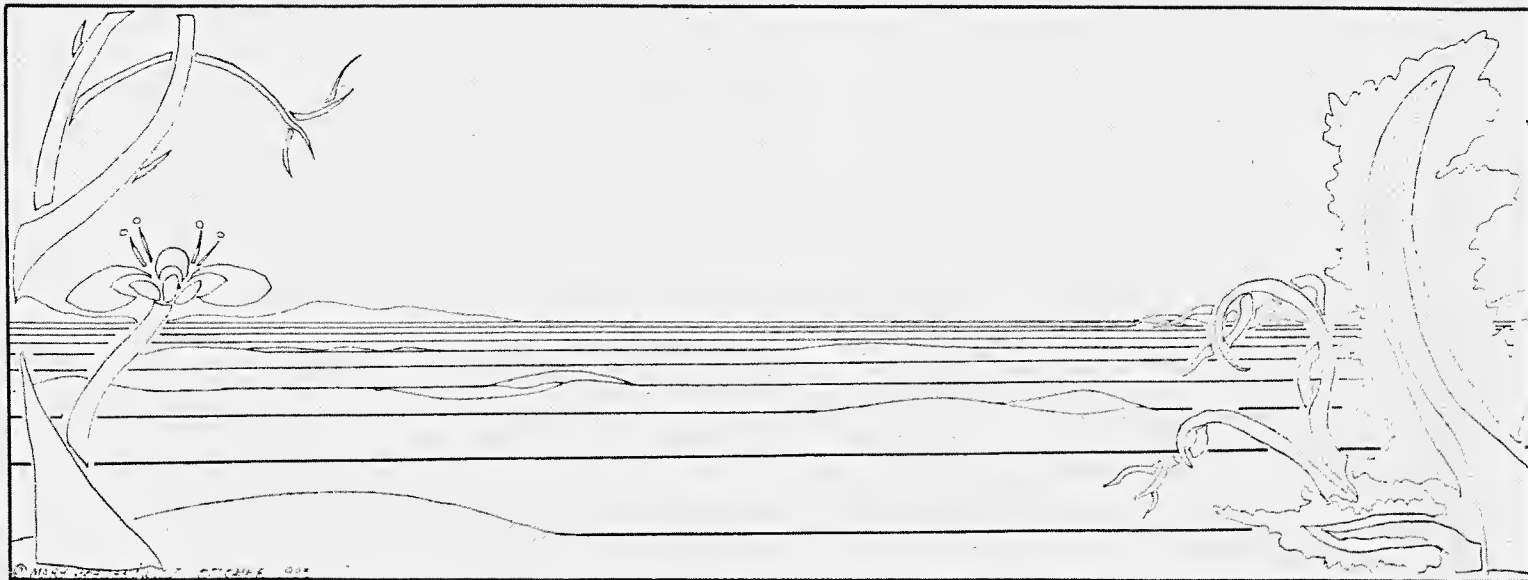
Wendy Rose



Photograph by Michael J. Elderman



Wendy Rose



Mary Bohdanowicz

# The Soul of Lillith: Nineteenth Century Fantastic Fiction by Women

by Cheryl Cline

Probably you have never heard of Marie Corelli. Unless you happen to be an antiquarian bookdealer, or a compiler of science fiction bibliographies, or if you've made it a point to read every bestseller published since 1850 (there is always somebody willing to do such things) the name of Marie Corelli is not likely to be on the tip of your tongue. Nor are the names Mrs. Gaskell, Mrs. Oliphant, Marey Noailles Murfee, Sara Coleridge, or Jane Loudon likely to conjure up comfortable feelings of familiarity.

Any collection of essays on under-appreciated women science fiction writers should at least nod in the direction of the 19th Century. Who could be more under-appreciated than the authors of long out-of-print novels gathering dust in the stacks of university libraries, waiting year after year for some poor graduate student--who's forgotten what it's like to read for pleasure--to pull them off the shelves and dissect them for her thesis? The last time some of these books have been checked out is 1956. Think of it. When I was two, someone was reading *Phantasmon: A Fairy Tale*. Maybe there's a two-year-old out there who'll check out the book in another 25 years.

Some people think there wasn't any science fiction written by women before 1900--excepting, of course, Mary Shelley, who was probably just a

fluke. But science fiction was tremendously popular in the 19th Century. Long before it became a genre, authors of both sexes were writing scientific romances, "lost race" adventures, utopian novels, futuristic satires, fairy tales or supernatural stories. I spent an afternoon in the library poring over science fiction bibliographies and came up with a list of over 100 books by nearly 40 women authors. That's a pretty good showing for an afternoon's work. But it's just a start. Thousands of books that could be classed as science fiction or fantasy were published before the turn of the century. Since there have been "scribbling dames" from the time of Sappho, it stands to reason that a lot of these books were written by women.

For this article I have picked half a dozen women writers, trying for a representative sampling, but limited to what I could find easily. Not all six are unknown. Both Mary Austin and Olive Schreiner are very well known--but not for writing fantasy. Their fantasy novels, in fact, are considered their most minor works. On the other hand, Mrs. Gaskell and Mrs. Oliphant are remembered chiefly for their supernatural tales, but not nearly as well as they should be, judging from the blank looks I get when I mention their names. Sara Coleridge's fairy tale should be better known. All she's remembered for is being the

mother of Samuel Coleridge. Marie Corelli is certainly obscure enough, but then again, it's hard to think of her as under-appreciated. She's probably as appreciated as she ever deserved. Still she's worthy of some attention, as an interesting eccentric, if nothing else.

There's something about 19th Century SF and fantasy that appeals to me. I'm drawn to titles like *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* by Jane Loudon, *Nineteen Hundred? A Forecast* by Mary Anne Hearne, and *The Bacillus of Beauty* by Harriet Stark, partly, I admit, because they're quaint. A lot of 19th Century SF has become quaint, as real life outstripped the most fantastic speculations of its authors. Rhapsodies on the mysterious powers of electricity are amusing to modern readers who take the light bulb in the refrigerator for granted. Ghosts on the moors, people bricked up in dungeons, zeppelins, lost races, futuristic utopias set in 1890--all of these seem hopelessly out of date. This doesn't mean they're not fun to read; on the contrary, they're entertaining because they're old fashioned.

Nineteenth Century fantastic fiction isn't all ghosts and gaslight, however. Fiction by women writers can also be strikingly modern. Feminism is one area in which real life has not outstripped the imaginations of 19th Century authors. Social change, at least in this respect, has certainly lagged behind science, and the ideas of the early feminist movement are a long way from being out of date. Novels written by women in the last century will often have a modern outlook no matter how outmoded the science and the setting. In *The Soul of Lillith*--a book in which a dead woman is kept "alive" by "electro-flamma" and a scientist builds a perpetual-motion machine--the author, Marie Corelli, protests against the ill-treatment of women authors. From Sappho to the present day, she writes, men have always sneered at women's work, "And if praise is at any time given, how grudging and half-hearted it is! . . . If she produces a great work of art in literature, it is never thoroughly acknowledged; and the hard blows delivered on Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, George Sand and others of their calibre, far outweigh their laurels." The latter two took men's names to shelter themselves a little from the abuse of male critics, "But let a man write the veriest trash that ever was printed, he will still be accredited by his own sex with something better than the cleverest woman could compass." She has much more to say on this subject, and she interrupts her tale in order to spend nearly 16 pages saying it.

Bad as she was, her books are still fun to read, as long as you skip over the parts where she preaches her theory of reincarnation (although her electromagnetic theories of the Soul can be entertaining.) The first book by Corelli I picked up was *The Soul of Lillith*, and I'm glad I did, because it has the most "B-Movie" science-fictional scenes and the least philosophizing of any of her books. The Lillith of the title is a beautiful woman of about twenty years old, who has been dead since she was fourteen. Luckily, however, when she dies, she happens to be in the arms of one El-Rami, a scientist from some unspecified Eastern country. El-Rami always carries

with him a vial of "Electro-flamma", a revitalizing potion that keeps him young, and as the girl dies in his arms he is struck with the urge to experiment, and injects her with some of the precious fluid. He carries her back to his tower, where she lies in a trance for six years (growing into a beautiful young woman in the meantime) during which time her "Soul" travels all around the universe and reports back to El-Rami, who doesn't believe a word of it. Her task is to convince him. I'd recommend *The Soul of Lillith* to all of you who secretly watch sci-fi thriller re-runs on Saturday afternoons.

For those of you who like fairy tales, I recommend *Phantasmion: A Fairy Tale*, by Sarah Coleridge. *Phantasmion* was first published in 1837 in a limited edition of 250 copies, an expensive edition, without a single illustration, and anonymously. As Lord Coleridge so politely puts it in the preface to the second edition, "A small edition of a long fairy tale, by an unnamed author, published at nine shillings, had little chance in those days of forcing its way into general circulation". In other words, it bombed. He was, however, confident that "a new generation will find in this, her only work of fiction, her longest continual original composition, the delicate imagination, the melody of verse, the clear and picturesque language, the virginal purity of conception which are to be found in this book by those who look for them".

An epic fantasy, it's been justifiably compared in scope to Tolkein's *The Lord of the Rings*. Unfortunately, unlike *The Lord of the Rings*, Coleridge's epic is all crammed into one volume. *Phantasmion* is like what *The Lord of the Rings* would be if *Reader's Digest* got ahold of it. A story with two main plots and several subplots, involving the political and romantic machinations of four kingdoms, complicated by the maneuverings of various good fairies, bad fairies, good witches, bad witches and undecided earth spirits, could have used more room to stretch out.

Still, there's no reason to write the book off completely. Coleridge tells a very charming tale of the young king Phantasmion, who, tired of being sheltered by his advisors, decides to see the world for himself. Of course he lands in some exciting adventures as soon as he leaves his courtyard. He has to stop the Evil Queen Maudra and her lover Glandreth from carrying out their plot to take over the four kingdoms, he has to return a magic pitcher to its rightful owner, he has to decide which of his young princess cousins he likes better before they both brain him, and he has to learn how to use the magic powers granted him by his fairy-Guardian, Potentilla. This last is quite entertaining, since Potentilla, being the Queen of the insect world, gives him powers of various bugs, slugs and winged creatures. It takes him a while to get the hang of it; he learns very quickly that if you don't watch where you jump with your magical grasshopper legs, you might end up in a potter's stall full of broken merchandise. Phantasmion grows up to be a hero, and everyone, excepting Maudra and Glandreth, lives, if not happily, at least peaceably ever after.

The next two authors on my list, Mrs. Gaskell and Mrs. Oliphant, were two of the most prolific authors of the 19th Century. Mrs. Gaskell, the older of the two, is perhaps the better known, since she wrote the first biography of Charlotte Bronte. She's also the great-great aunt of SF writer Jane Gaskell, and no doubt would approve of her descendent's occupation. Mrs. Gaskell is best-known to readers of fantasy as the author of a handful of ghost



State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Mrs. Oliphant

stories, which have been collected by Michael Ashley in *Mrs. Gaskell's Tales of Mystery and Horror*. Most of the stories in this book, including two of her best-known tales "The Squire's Story" and "The Old Nurse's Story", were originally published in the magazines published by Charles Dickens as part of his series of "Christmas Tales by the Fireside". Strange choices perhaps, for the season to be jolly, but if you ever want to scare the wits out of yourself on Christmas Eve, you'd do well to start with these stories. Mrs. Gaskell is one good storyteller, and these stories are fairly concise as 19th Century writing goes. One thing to keep in mind when reading 19th Century authors, major or minor, is that they took their time, and you'd better be ready to do the same. As Virginia Woolf wrote in an essay about Mrs. Gaskell, "Nothing would persuade them to concentrate. Able by nature to spin sentence after sentence melodiously, they seem to have left out nothing they knew how to say". Nineteenth Century writers believed in mood. They'd spare no amount of verbiage to get it just right. Sometimes they pile it on so thick you get to feeling claustrophobic, as if you were in a Victorian drawing-room with too much furniture in it. When a writer was good, and Mrs. Gaskell was often good, she could evoke a dreamy, timeless, underwater feeling, just claustrophobic enough to make you really identify

with the character looking out the window at the long-ago-drowned child looking in. . .

Mrs. Oliphant, or, to give you her full, solidly 19th Century name, Margaret Oliphant Wilson Oliphant, was a Scottish writer who began writing, for money, when she was young. She continued to write, for money, after her marriage to her cousin, Francis Oliphant. Whenever the family needed money (which was quite often) she provided it with her pen. In four and a half years of marriage, she produced three children, five novels and some 25 stories and articles for *Blackwoods Magazine*. After her husband's death in 1859, she continued to write to support her children. All in all, she wrote 123 books and some 250 contributions to *Blackwoods*, most of it forgotten.

Her best remembered supernatural story is "The Beleaguered City", a novel published in 1880. Told in documentary style, it chronicles the takeover of a French city by the dead. The living inhabitants are driven from the city by "unseen" forces who hold the city under siege until the rightful inhabitants are deemed worthy to return. The story is heavily laden with mood--the "underwater" effect is definitely felt--but the weight is lightened somewhat by slight touches of irony. In her shorter stories, Mrs. Oliphant's talent for irony is even more apparent, as is a touch of whimsy. In the ghost story "Old Lady Mary", the main character dies and finds herself in a rather surreal afterlife. Discovering, post-humously, that she has unwittingly disinherited her niece, she decides to return to the living and set things right. There is just one problem: nobody can see her but dogs and small children. She tries in vain to get somebody's attention, but it's not until her niece falls ill of fever (which lowers the barriers between this world and the next) that she's able to communicate her remorse. She returns, forgiven, to the afterlife, and, in a wonderfully sweeping paragraph, the situation clears up of its own without need of supernatural interference at all. I imagine Mrs. Oliphant finished up this story with a smile.

With the next two authors we enter, but just barely, the 20th Century. Neither Mary Austin or Olive Schreiner can be called obscure authors. Schreiner's "Story of an African Farm" and her feminist treatise "Women and Labor" are both classics, and Mary Austin's books on the American West are compared to the works of John Muir and Henry David Thoreau.

However, Austin's fantasy novel *Outland* must be one of the novels *Notable American Women* refers to as "eccentric in conception", since it's rarely mentioned. She herself is considered eccentric. *Twentieth Century Authors* "declares" she was utterly out of tune with all the conventions of her time and place, and her neighbors hated her". Nevertheless, she moved in literary circles with Ambrose Bierce and Jack London, and H. G. Wells called her the most intelligent woman in America, an honor none of her neighbors could claim.

*Outland* is a wonderful book and in my opinion a lost fantasy classic--a lost feminist fantasy classic. I couldn't at first put my finger on just what made it so fun to read, until I realized it was basically a children's book for adults. If your younger days were spent reading books in which a couple of plain, ordinary kids stumbled upon a secret trail, or cave, or doorway into wonderland, this book will take you back. In this case the "kids" are Mona, a just-retired English professor and her friend Herman, a sociology professor who is wooing her, much to her disdain. On one of their walks in the woods they come "into a little open glade where lilies grew, through which the trail seemed to lead to one of those places where you have always wished to be". This trail leads them to a "lost race" of woodspeople, who, upon finding them in their "territory" hold them captive. The Outliers, as they are called, are at war with another clan, the Far Folk, over a buried treasure in the possession of the Outliers. Mona and Herman become involved in the dispute, of course, and also in a private battle of their own. Herman, being the male sociology professor that he is, wants to convince the Outliers to dig up the treasure, buy the land on which they live, and allow researchers to come in and study their culture. Mona is appalled. As some of the younger men of the tribe lean towards this idea, schisms appear within the clan and things become very cool between Mona and Herman. The book is spiced with dry wit concerning the relationship between men and women, such as this priceless conversation between Mona and an Outlier woman, Trastevara:

[Trastevara] "If you made a promise to me in regard to your being here and what you shall see among us, would he, your friend, be bound by it?"  
 "Well, in most particulars; at any rate, he would give it consideration."  
 "Does he love you?"  
 "No," I said. I was sure of that much.  
 "How do you know?"  
 "By the best token in the world. He has told me so."  
 "...Then in that case he will probably do as you say. If he loved you," she smiled, "he would expect you to do as he said."

Olive Schreiner's *Dreams*, like Austin's *Outland* is not considered one of her best works. Certainly compared to "Story of an African Farm" it's slight. Dream-allegory is never anybody's strong suit, and most of the "dreams" in the book

are, like other such writings, rather too obscure on the one hand and altogether too obvious on the other. But "Three Dreams in a Desert" is a remarkably apt summary of women's long struggle for freedom and equality.

In the first "dream", the narrator sees the figures of a woman, bowed to the ground by a centuries-old burden, bound to the man who has placed it on her back. We, and the dreamer, are told that the woman could rise, and the two could walk freely on the desert as they had in the long-ago past, if only they realized it. As the dreamer watches, the woman finally begins to struggle to her feet, but each time she tries to stand, the man pulls on the cord between them and she falls. The dream guide explains, "He does not understand. When she moves she draws the band between them and hurts him, and he moves farther from her. The day will come when he will understand...in that day he will stand close to her, and look into her eyes with sympathy."

In the second dream, a woman wants to cross a river to the "Land of Freedom" but first she must put down a creature she carries at her breast. She balks. "He has been a child so long, so long I have carried him...He has lisped one word only to me in the desert--'Passion!' I have dreamed he might learn to say 'Friendship' in that land". But Reason, standing by the river's edge, tells her to "Lay him down...When he finds you have left him alone he will open his wings and fly... He will be a man then, not a child". She lays him down (but not before he's given her a nasty bite) and suddenly overcome with anguish of her loss, cries, "I am so utterly alone!" But Reason silences her, saying, "What do you hear?" Listening, she says, "I hear a sound of feet, a thousand times ten thousand...and they beat this way". Reason says "They are the feet of those who shall follow you".

In the third dream, the dreamer sees a land in which "walked brave women and brave men, hand in hand. And they looked into each other's eyes, and they were not afraid".

"And I saw the women also hold each other's hands.  
 And I said to him beside me, 'What place is this?'  
 And he said, 'This is heaven.'  
 And I said 'Where is it?'  
 And he said, 'On Earth.'  
 And I said, 'When shall these things be?'  
 And he answered, 'IN THE FUTURE.'"



# Mediocrity and Women's Science Fiction

by Jessica  
Amanda Salmonson

Vonda N. McIntyre has said, in *Khatru* and at various other times, that when science fiction has as many mediocre writers who are women, as it does men, then SF will have come of age. I'm certain Vonda didn't mean this as a 100% absolute truism with universal applicability, and surely it could be argued that more mediocrity won't improve SF one whit; but there is an element of truth in the idea that women writers must be better, not "just as good," to be as successful as male writers. If we accept this element of truth, then there is some reason to believe that an influx of mediocre writing by women SF writers indicates marginal improvement as regards prejudice in publishers' minds, and the day is nearer when a bad SF book by a woman has as good a chance of publication as a bad one by a man.

With this in mind, I have searched for mediocre books by women SF writers, and found four in this category. Three of them are not well-known nor widely published; one is fairly popular. I wish to preface the reviews with a definition of mediocrity: it means "average." It doesn't mean wretchedly awful, putrid, unreadable, meritless, or rabbit raisins. So I hope the authors who find a book of theirs categorized as "mediocre" won't take offense.

First on the agenda is Dorothy E. Skinkle's *Star Giant*, a book written in such simple language that it may have been intended for children, though Tower Books distributed it as an adult title in 1969. The premise is that all the giants throughout history hail from the same race, and are exiled from the planet Liban.

Skinkle was clearly interested in topics of particular interest to feminists, but in 1969 she apparently had too small a body of literature or non-fiction from which to draw any perspective beyond the prevailing androcentricity. The book is full of burlesque reinforcements of sexual stereotypes and oppressive ideas like, "Make a good life for yourself [on Earth]. Find a new wife. Have a family. Make a useful citizen of yourself. That's the only way you will have a chance at happiness". This advice is from the protagonist's mother (a princess) who delivers the line with such a poker-face that, at first, I suspected satire. But it remained an important side-theme in Ben-oni's adventures.



hanke-woods  
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Joan Hanke Woods

Heralding from an unimaginative culture which is a parodic reflection of our own, it only takes Ben-oni six months to adopt Earth's ways, which happen to be quite familiar ways to this presumed superior star giant. He meets a woman named Janice whose grandfather was one of the exiled giants, and she's gullible enough to believe everything Ben tells her right from the start. Meeting her helps him forget his wife Jano who had "depended on him so much. It was hard knowing that he'd never see the quick tears glistening on her soft cheek, never caress her satin hair". Janice is a good trade, since she is quite as insipid as Jano!

Skinkle retells many of the legends of mythological and historical giants, from the perspective of the book's premise. These are interesting if simplistic. Hercules, Aeneas, Polyphemus, Goliath . . . all giants of all the legends are encompassed by the theme of *Star Giant*.

One of the exiles discussed was the mother of Amazons; her name, unimaginatively, was Amaza. Before her exile, she swore she'd rule her planet, though the position was to go to her eldest brother. She was stronger than all of them, and also she refused to marry unless to a man who could defeat her in battle. There were few takers. Finally she meets her match, and instantaneously ceases to be the reckless, powerful woman previously described. "Amaza smiled happily. She'd found a real man." She goes home with him, walking properly behind, and they proceed to rule the whole planet (yes, Liban is that simple). Her brothers drug Amaza and her husband and send them off to Earth, where Amaza births the Amazon race. Her daughters are "tall and strong . . . muscles as well-developed as their mother's". That's nice. But like Amaza, they all desire to be bested by a man worthy to be their master. It takes a while, but, "Eventually the girls are married".

There are women characters throughout this book, itself a rarity in 60s SF (or 70s for that matter). Unfortunately, these characters are uniformly weak and slavish, dependent on or threatened by men. They are recognizable as "good" by their beauty rather than their character.

*Star Giant* is not a good book for readers who want to get away from "standard" SF which is juvenile in its approach and sexist in its execution. It is interesting, however, as an example of a woman's fantastic vision and concern for women's issues in 60s SF. Skinkle's book is average SF of its decade, with the added bonus of at least trying to include major women characters. That it fails and remains oppressive with its cliché assumptions is a sign of our changing times. The improved insight of many current readers makes blatant sex-role stereotyping something that seriously outdates a "futuristic" novel, just as much futuristic fiction of the 80s will look very old-fashioned ten years from now.

The second example of mediocrity is *Time of the Fourth Horseman* by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. This is an overly repetitious novel; often within the course of a single set of dialog, the same point will be made twice, perhaps in a literal application of one of Delany's rules that everything important be said twice (but not on the same page, please!). The theme is familiar. It's been done in best seller disaster novels, in SF, and in disaster movies: plague threatens a city which has been closed off, but the plague will, of course, spread to the world. This is being done as a government-backed medical project to cut down on overpopulation and the project just sort of gets out of hand. The almost comic cynicism is perhaps justified to anyone who has worked, as I have, and as Yarbro has, inside a hospital. But in this particular novel, it never came alive as genuine horror or even social criticism.

It could have been an interesting premise, despite the fact that it's been done a hundred times before. Given our actual technological ability to create weird horrible strains of hideous diseases (such as a recombinant cancer-meningitis mix — an experiment actually proposed at one time) if scientists were crazy enough (and they just may be crazy enough), *Fourth Horseman* could have been credible and, thereby, frightening. It isn't either.

For a while, there was a temporary moratorium on recombinant DNA experimentation as a direct result of the incredible plan to fuse a non-malignant monkey tumor with meningitis to see what nifty results could occur. Someone visiting the center planning this monumentally stupid experiment pointed out in abject horror that what might develop would be a new type of cancer with the virulence of meningitis. Thus the moratorium and even the threat of Congressional intervention when Senator Ted Kennedy caught wind of it. This is real life. What could science fiction do with it? *Fourth Horseman* does absolutely nothing. Instead, we're asked to believe that extinct diseases are being reinvented by some unspecified process. (If it's science fiction, it doesn't need to be rational, right?).

What we're treated to instead of extrapolation is a series of shallow and unlikely relationships. Primarily, we must suffer the internal anguish of one dull woman struggling to balance her career as trod-upon housewife (plain, ordinary wench "lucky" enough to marry an Adonis who mistreats her and makes the nasty diseases) with her hobby of being a medical doctor. This secondary career, we're given repeatedly to understand, is somehow connected with her maternal instinct. In her professional capacity, early in the story, we see a mere medic pushing her around emotionally and also refusing to respond to direct orders — because his male privilege clearly supersedes her actual authority. This is something not terribly likely; in spite of the special

harasses a woman doctor does have in a male-dominated profession, it doesn't extend to medics refusing direct orders from a practicing physician. This is but one example of the interpersonal relationships in the book which are either uninteresting or unlikely.

The book's ending (which Bay Area critics promised would be a doozy—they live next door to the author) turns out to be *deux ex machina* with little relationship to the rest of the story. The loose end of a bunch of avenger kids is left a-danglin'.

All in all, if you want quality work by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, read anything but *Time of the Fourth Horseman*, especially her short stories.

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The third miss is *Starbreed* (Ballantine, 1970) by Martha deMey Clow. It begins with a scene so incredibly sexist that, as happened while I was reading *Star Giant*, I suspected satire: an alien star-sailor has six hours liberty on Earth and goes hunting for a whore. He has trouble finding one, being an alien "Rojo". He eventually scores a 14-year-old hooker. After he's long gone, she gives birth to a half-breed Homo Centauri, and then she promptly dies, her importance to the plot served. There was no satire, folks.

The kid grows into a super-genius of a young man, though the author is no hot-shot in conveying genius. The boy seems like half the nitwits on Earth. He's raised in a convent—but the kind of upbringing a boy would receive from a bunch of nuns is not shown, nor does it seem to have much impact on his later personality, though even a full-blooded Earth-kid ought to carry some weird weight around with that heavy a load of Catholicism. The potential influence of this rearing environment is never investigated and this whole aspect of the story gets dropped as fast as the 14-year-old hooker.

Instead of an interesting portrait of an alien Catholic, we are treated to a naive vision of intergalactic imperialism and economy, by an author apparently limited in

her knowledge of imperialism and its effects, and of economics. The protagonist barely breathes. The aliens are imitations of Western culture devoid of noticeable differences in morality or viewpoint. This is "average" SF if ever there was any, and surely meets Vonda N. McIntyre's need of mediocrity from women writers (with the lofty responsibility of bringing SF of age).

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The last book to ring out with a dull thud in the night is called *Chrysalis of Death* (Pocket Books, 1976) by Eleanor Robinson. Yet again I expected satire in the first couple of chapters, since my personal bias causes me to give every woman writer the benefit of the doubt. The theme is trite (Pleistocene ooze destroys the world) and the characters complacently stereotyped. Women worry about their teas and pregnancies. Men worry about the mysteries of the eternal desert and the fossil remains therein, or their income and how to afford better kitchen appliances for the Little Lady. (I'm not making this up!) There is even a Black Maid. Honest!

I felt as though the whole book was a put-on, right up to the silly double-suicide at the no-hope-for-the-future ending. The major theme seemed to be, "Isn't it a pity these sweet young couples never got to establish their longed-for nuclear families because the world is ending around them." Trite! Trite!

Perhaps this doesn't really prove that most women don't have to be instant-LeGuins to get as far as mediocre male writers. Perhaps it only indicates that most science fiction is pretty silly stuff, no matter who writes it. But never let it be said that women are incapable of sharing men's immature visions and stereotyped characterizations, or that women cannot at least occasionally peddle mediocrity. In the long run, Vonda's premise might actually stand, as three of the four authors discussed above have not, to my knowledge, published second novels, and certainly aren't successful. So the debate is still open. Scores of male writers sell mediocre books hand over fist, but women usually only get one chance to blow it!

## Paragraph

by Terry A. Garey

a microsecond adrift in time and water  
a strike on the line  
words break up into the air  
too fast  
splash down again  
hook doesn't set  
released by the water  
their spines curl as they whip away  
shocked, but free

c. 1984, Terry A. Garey

# Evangeline Walton—Interpreter

Evangeline Walton's books have been praised by such well known authors as Poul Anderson, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Stephen Donaldson, Fritz Lieber, Lester Del Ray, and Ursula Le Guin, as well as by specialists in her field, such as John Cowper Powys and Mary Renault. Lin Carter claims that the two great living fantasy writers are Le Guin and Walton. *The Saturday Review* lists the best 20th Century fantasies as those of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, T. H. White, and Evangeline Walton. Still, there are far too many fans who have never heard of her work.

Evangeline Walton Ensley (pseudonym: Evangeline Walton) was born in Indianapolis in 1907 and was privately educated due to ill-health. Her first novel, *The Virgin and the Swine*, was published in 1936 and begins her vivid recastings of the Welsh myths of the Mabinogion. There are many translations of the Mabinogion, and several authors (such as Tolkien) use magical images from these legends, but only Walton and Kenneth Morris have given us faithful re-tellings. Unfortunately, this book languished in undeserved obscurity; possibly due to the Depression's effect on book sales or due to the title—which Lin Carter says sounds like a steamy sizzler about illicit love on a Georgia pig farm, and certainly does not suggest the heroic fantasy which it is. Furthermore, the audience for fantasy was less developed then than now.

Since this book was unsuccessful at the time, Miss Walton shelved the Mabinogion series, including a second book already written, and tried her hand in other directions. Her second published book, *Witch House*, appeared in 1945 and is a haunted house/witchcraft story. Her third book, *The Cross and the Sword* (1956) is a historical novel set in England and Norway about 1000 AD. While not strictly fantasy, I will include these books in my discussion since they cover themes similar to her fantasy books.

Further complications in her health caused her to move to Tucson, Arizona in 1946, where she now lives. During the 50s she began work on a trilogy set in pre-classical Greece and based on the legends of Theseus and his wives. Just as this was developing, however, Mary Renault published her successful version of this myth as *The King Must Die* (1958) and *The Bull from the Sea* (1962). Feeling it would be unrealistic to try to sell her version so close on the heels of another, Walton postponed this project until just recently. A fortunate result of the delay between conception and publication of this work is the inclusion of information based on recent archaeological discoveries.

In the late 60s Paul Spencer, an SF fan working with Prentice-Hall, called her first book to the attention of Lin Carter, the editorial consultant for Ballantine books. The book excited both Carter and Mrs. Ballantine, and they published it in paperback in 1970 as *The Island of the Mighty*. The book was a success, and its publication brought to light the fact (unknown to them) that Walton was still living. They "received the most lovely and touching letter from her, thanking us for remembering a book the rest

of the literary world seemed to have forgotten long ago" [preface to 2, first printing]. (All numbered references for quotes refer to the bibliography.) She also mentioned her second Mabinogion novel, written in the 30s, but unpublished. They wrote back asking for it, and received *The Children of Llyr*, with many yellowed pages but many pages newly revised. This was published in 1971, and Walton returned to her goal of retelling all four branches of the Mabinogion. *The Song of Rhiannon* appeared in 1972, and *Prince of Annwn* in 1974.

In 1971, after finishing *Rhiannon* and encouraged by her recent successes, Walton visited Greece and Crete for further research on her Theseus trilogy. The first book in this series, *The sword is Forged*, was published in 1983.

The recent interest in Walton's works is not just due to the subject matter, but rather to her entrancing style and the extraordinary characterizations of people whom legends so often depict only as stereotypes. The legends also tend to omit the characters' motivations; listeners had heard the stories before and were interested in action. Walton portrays the humanity of both heroes and villains. It is a difficult and brilliant achievement that she can write simultaneously of: 1) Theseus kidnapping the young Amazon queen Antiope, forcing her into marriage, her falling in love with him and voluntarily remaining in Greece; while 2) building a natural storyline, where we believe the characters and their motivations; and 3) not have us view Theseus as evil or view Antiope as a traitor to her people. Molpadia, the Amazon War-Queen, is a hate-filled character whose actions will destroy the Amazons. Yet under Walton's treatment it is very hard to condemn her or convince ourselves that, in her shoes, we would act differently. Evnissyen, in *Llyr*, is a personification of evil, yet we find it difficult not to pity him, and almost to forgive him. In Lin Carter's words: "[His] inhuman hunger to hurt others, the soul-deep craving to inflict agony on every thing that lives, is brought to life on the page with superb clarity... [Later,] he has at last done something that disgusts even his own warped heart. Shivering on a hilltop, alone with his self-disgust, shaken by a passion of remorse, he claws and tears the grass of the hilltop...gaining some relief just by being able to hurt another living thing, even if it be only grass" [2, *ibid.*].

Of Evangeline Walton's seven books, six are novelizations of early European myths and legends. Four of them retell the Mabinogion, the national epic of Wales, which dates to the 5th or 6th Century AD. Walton's books deal with the oldest of these legends, which were written in four "branches" or epics. The newest legends in the Mabinogion are the first King Arthur stories, although scholars have traced some Arthurian legends (the search for the Holy Grail and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight) to the epics that Walton retells.

While many redactions of old legends exist, Walton's are better written than most. What distinguishes her even from other good authors in

# of Myths

## by Darrah Chavey

this genre (e.g. Anouilh, T. H. White, or Marion Zimmer Bradley) is her historical faithfulness. By this I mean not just an accurate portrayal of the social and cultural setting, but also a faithfulness to the legends in their earliest form. She does, however, elaborate on the originals, filling in gaps and adding structure to the diverse stories of legend. Where she makes changes, she does so in the spirit of the legends, and always with historical reasons. The two monsters Pwyll fights in *Anwyn* and the story of Dylan's conception in *Island* are both additions, but drawn from other Celtic legends. Walton omits later corruptions: the magic castle in the Mabinogion is an anachronism--so this becomes the magic cave opening in *Rhiannon*; Manawyddan has no magical powers in the Mabinogion, most likely due to the monkish transcribers, so she ascribes to him the magical feats of his Irish equivalent, Manannan. She also adds character motivations and carefully reasoned explanations of known events. Plutarch tells of a Greek law forbidding any ship to sail with more than five men. Walton interprets this as a Cretian tool to hold power over Greece. Vital to the Mabinogion series are her explanations of things which "just happen" in the original, such as Pryderi's climbing the mound in *Rhiannon*, or Dylan's death in *Island*.

One aspect of Walton's historical viewpoint is that she does not allow 20th Century attitudes to alter her reconstructions of the legends. This is especially notable in the roles of both magic and women in her books. Although most historians do not believe in magic, the early story-tellers did, and magic remains vital in her works. Her books relate a historical decline in our knowledge of magic. The Mabinogion series (set about 1700 BC) is full of powerful magic. The world of Theseus (1380 BC) has magic, but less powerful forms: the oracles, the Minotaur, and Molpadia's transformation of her spirit form into animals. About all that remains in 1000 AD (*The Cross and the Sword*) is the ability of some Lapps to send their spirit forms out of their bodies. In *Witch House* (20th Century), magic remains only in vestigial form: the main character has Hindu mystic training; and the others are just very successful practitioners of ESP-type phenomena. With respect to the role of women, her books have several strong women, but women in these societies were generally subservient to the men, and she neither changes nor hides that attitude. In *The Sword is Forged* this Greek attitude contrasts with the Amazons; but in her other books it stands alone. While this makes the characters more believable, it is easy to get annoyed at Pwyll (the hero) when he says: "She was like other women after all...afraid of fancies, when all peril was past" [1]. We do get to see Pwyll chase Rhiannon for several days before asking her to stop, and only then will she speak to him. At last, we think, here is a good role model. But once they are betrothed, he "owns" her; and when tricked into offering "anything he has" to another man, who asks for Rhiannon, she cannot refuse to wed that man

instead.

Another unifying theme in Evangeline Walton's work is her study of religions and their contrasts with Christianity: the Mabinogion series investigates the Druids; *Witch House* looks at Hinduism; *The Cross and the Sword* considers Norse mythology; and the Theseus series is grounded in Greek mythology. To the Welsh Druids there are many worlds nested inside each other; and "death is the means of transportation from world to world, and a time comes to gods, as to men, when their work in one is done" [1]. When we die, the worst that can happen is to live in Annwn until we are born into this world again. This contrasts with Christianity, where "many men believe that death will plunge them into a sea of fire where they must burn forever", and yet still view the "torturing monster" responsible for this as "the loving Father of all" [1]. Of her books, only *The Cross and the Sword* has anything good to say about Christianity, and even here it is only for the exceptional Christian. Most of the Christians are only too willing to torture a person to save his soul. In comparison, the Vikings appear civilized. In neither this world nor that of the Mabinogion can Walton's heroes reconcile a Christian hell with a loving God. Much of her religious commentary is piercing and insightful, without becoming tedious or overbearing (except, possibly, in *Witch House*). My own thoughts on religion were significantly revised in reading Walton's works, and I could recommend her books on these grounds alone.

A final unifying theme of her books is the clash of cultures. The Mabinogion series has the Picts and Celts more or less peacefully coexisting in Wales, and the distinctions between their cultures and religions help us to understand both more clearly. *The Cross and the Sword* is a story of the Danes and Norwegians who try to loot England; those who settle in England; and the English reaction against both groups. *The Sword*



Evangeline Walton

R. Alain Everts

is *Forged* details the conflict between the Amazons and neighboring cultures, especially the Greek. This is not just a conflict between sexes; Antiope's worst foes in Athens are the Greek women outraged by the ideas she advances.

In both fantasy series, the culture clash includes the transition from the worship of a female goddess to that of male gods. In *The Sword is Forged* the Cretes, in their drive for power over the Greeks, replace the Greek gods (male and female) with all male ones, and replace the priestesses at Delphi with priests. Meanwhile, the Amazons still worship the Earth Mother, Gaea. Their city, Themiskyra, is named after Themis (daughter of Gaea), the personification of justice in Greek mythology and one of their "old gods". In the Mabinogion books, the "Old Tribes" (the Picts) worship the ancient gods; and primary among these are the Gray Man, who brings death, and "that old mysterious Goddess from whose own womb all things had come in the beginning" [1]. In this culture, based where possible on historic knowledge but fleshed out by Walton's keen imagination, the Picts do not believe in fatherhood, hence property and kingship are matrilineal. The old Welsh word for king applies to either sex, and women may once have been kings, but the kingship now descends from a man to his sister's sons. Among those who scoff at fatherhood this is the only guarantee that the heir is of the king's blood. Meanwhile, the "New Tribes" (the Celts) "left Her worship to women, made offerings only to their Man Gods, who brought them battle and loot". The Celts introduce the Picts to

fatherhood and marriage. This brings problems: "Yet woman, though she ceased to be king and man protected her, was still revered as the source of life. Only now when man is learning that she cannot give life without him does he begin to scorn her whom he protects. So she that created property will become property" [1]. The Celts learn some Druidic magic from the Picts, but Walton insists that they can never master it, since their male priests have usurped power from the women and do not honor the Goddess.

Some areas of Walton's writing invite criticism. Her descriptions of the physical settings of events frequently leave something to be desired; with some memorable exceptions, such as Arawn's entrance in *Anwnn*, or the St. Brice's day massacre in *The Cross and the Sword*. Many of her stories begin slowly, and a reader uninterested in the historical setting might become bored. But her weaknesses here are more than made up for by her characters and their stories: the wonder and magical flavor of *Island*; the grim, merciless tragedies of *Llyr* and *The Cross and the Sword*; and the otherworldly drama of human against gods in *Anwnn* and *Rhiannon*.

I hope I have convinced some of you to read these books. The easiest to find is *The Sword is Forged*, since it's still in print, but due to several good reviews of the Mabinogion series, many libraries have these books. They are also in print in England, so most bookstores can order them. This series, especially *Anwnn* and *Island*, are Walton's true masterpieces. But then there's always the rest of the Theseus series...

#### Plot Summaries of Evangline Walton's books:

##### THE MABINOGIAN SERIES:

(Listed in chronological, not publication order.)  
[1] *Prince of Anwnn*. Ballantine; N.Y.; 1974.

This book has a different feel to it than the rest of the series. Some of her books start slowly; but this book has you in Hell by page 18. More than the others, *Anwnn* deals with the world beyond death; so the magic in it differs from the other books.

[2] *The Children of Llyr*. Ballantine; N.Y.; 1971.

This should be "The Children of Penardim" or "The Doom of the Dark Woman" (Walton's choice), since the Picts did not yet believe in fatherhood. Also, two of the children are the product of rape, and this is the source of the tragedies: the children learn about marriage and fatherhood, resulting in the first political marriage, a king's desire for his son to be his heir, and the war against Ireland.

*The Song of Rhiannon*. Ballantine; N.Y.; 1972.

A continuation of both *Anwnn* and *Llyr*. In the Druidic religion the Goda nearest us still have much to learn, and a mortal (Manawyddan) may be able to stop the revenge of the Gray Man; who has never forgiven Pryll and Rhiannon for the events detailed in *Anwnn*.

*The Virgin and the Swine*. Willet, Clark; Chicago; 1936. also published as:

*The Island of the Mighty*. Ballantine; N.Y.; 1970.

The story of the magicians Math and Gwydion. A woman gives birth against her will (magic, not rape) and violates the "Ancient Harmonies" which prohibit injuring her own children. One son is

curse never to lay with a woman "of the race that now dwells upon this earth", so the two magicians make a woman's body from flowers and pull down a soul for it from the upper winds; not knowing what that soul had been. She is married on her first day of being, while "etill but a puppet...eniminated only by instincts...[with] blinks in her mind end feeling as though she had never been completely ensouled". Math's queen wonders "what would happen if ever a will should waken within that feir, half-human thing that enchantments had evoked from the unknown void", but you can probably guess.

##### OTHER NOVELS:

*Witch House*. Arkham House; Sauk City, Wis; 1945.

The world has little magic left in it; but small-minded men can still use it evilly. This is the weakest of Walton's works.

*The Cross and the Sword*. Bourey & Curl; N.Y.;

1956. Also published as:

*Son of Darkness*. Hutchinson; London; 1957.

The story behind the martyrdom of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1012. His suffering was cut short by a mercy killer; and this is the fictionalized biography of that killer, with his life being used to portray the world of his time and the events leading to the martyrdom.

*The Sword is Forged*. Pocket Books; 1983.

This starts a trilogy on the life of Theseus, but the re-telling of the Amazon legend is probably the cause of the attention it has received (it had 6 major book reviews in 1983). For the Amazons, it is a conflict between two points of view: "Truly [love] is terrible, a

devouring flame...such love breaks many bonds for every one it forges. And for the woman it must always forge bondage" vs. "The Amazons love freedom; they could have seen [the Goddess] more clearly than any other people ever has. But hate and fear bind them fast." As in *Anwnn*, the heroine finds her people flawed, and leaves them for a husband from far away. (If you don't know the story, postpone reading the author's note in *The Sword is Forged*--it gives away the ending.)

##### SHORT FICTION:

"At the End of the Corridor". *Weird Tales*, 42, #4 (May 1950), pp. 74-81.

A short story from her horror period.

"Above Ker-Is". *The Fantastic Imagination II. An Anthology of High Fantasy*; ed: R. R. Boyer & K. Zahorski; Avon; N.Y.; 1978. Also in *The Year's Best Fantasy Stories 5*; ed: Lin Carter; Daw; N.Y.; 1980.

"The Mistress of Kaer-Mor". *The Phoenix Tree* (anthology); ed: R. Boyer & K. Zahorski; Avon; N.Y.; 1980.

These two short stories are two different treatments of Ahe, the woman--goddess--demon of Breton mythology. A third treatment is unpublished. These stories were written in the 20s.

"Celtic Myth in the Twentieth Century" in *Mythlore*; Number 11, 3, #3, pp. 19-22; 1976.

1972: Nebula Award nomination (for *Llyr*)

1973: Mythopoeic Award for Fantasy (for *Rhiannon*)

1979: Fritz Lieber Award (for overall contributions)

# Bibliographies

Mary Bohdanow

Feminist Collections: Women's Studies Library  
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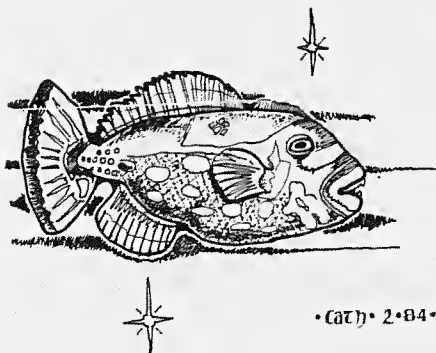
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## Killough

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## MacLean

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- 2 This story is also anthologized in Pamela Sargent's *Women of Wonder*
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# Women SF Writers You've Probably Never Heard Of


by Tom Porter

This is a retrospective list, compiled from "The Panel That Wouldn't Die", presented at WisCon's 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. You may notice that most of these writers are no longer ones you've never heard of. Three of them have been WisCon guests of honor. This just goes to show that WisCon knows how to pick 'em.

Arneson, Eleanor  
Auel, Jean  
Bersianik, Louky  
Bodger, Joan  
Brown, Rosel George  
Bryant, Drorothy  
Dibell, Ansen  
Duffy, Maureen  
Felice, Cynthia  
Gearhart, Sally  
Gedge, Pauline  
Hodgell, P. C.  
Hoover, H. M.  
Hughes, Monica  
Jones, Diana Wynne  
Kendall, Carol  
Killough, Lee  
Konigsburg, E. L.

Kress, Nancy  
MacAvoy, R. A.  
Maxwell, Ann  
May, Julian  
Mayhar, Ardath  
McKillip, Patricia  
McKinley, Robin  
Meisel, Sandra  
Meluch, R. M.  
Mitchison, Naomi  
Morris, Janet  
Newman, Sharan  
Park, Ruth  
Paul, Barbara  
Pierce, Meredith Ann  
St. Clair, Margaret  
Scott, Jody  
Singer, Rochelle  
Stone, Josephine Rector  
Tuttle, Lisa  
Von Harbou, Thea  
Wilder, Cherry

We invite you to come to WisCon 10, to help us add to this list.



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★Buck & Juanita Coulson  
★Bev DeWeese  
★Suzette Haden Elgin  
★David Hartwell  
★Steven Vincent Johnson  
★Lee Killough  
Elizabeth A. Lynn  
Katherine MacLean  
★Catherine McClenahan  
Vonda N. McIntyre  
Marta Randall  
★Jessica Amanda Salmonson  
★Lisa Tuttle  
John Varley  
Joan Vinge  
Don & Elsie Wollheim  
Susan Wood  
★Chelsea Quinn Yarbro

Those marked with a ★ have already indicated their intentions to attend WisCon 10.

Help make this the best WisCon ever: be there!

## Attending Memberships:

\$14 through Jan. 31; \$18 at the door

## Supporting Memberships:

\$6 anytime

## Information:

WisCon, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624;  
608+251-6226 days; 608+233-0326 evenings

## Room Rates

\$52 single, \$60 double, \$64 triple, \$68 quad

## Hotel

The Concourse, 1 W. Dayton St., Madison, WI 53703  
800+362-8270 (in WI); 800+356-8293 (outside WI)  
608+257-6000 (local)

